



March 10, 2021

Randy Ambrosie
Commissioner
Canadian Football League

Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the Canadian Football League, thank you for your commitment to public service and your interest in this important issue of public policy.

I am writing to express our support for Bill C-218, an Act to amend the Criminal Code to allow single game sports betting.

We have nine teams playing professional football across the country: the BC Lions, Saskatchewan Roughriders, Calgary Stampeders, the EE Football Team in Edmonton, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Hamilton Tiger-Cats, Ottawa REDBLACKS, Toronto Argonauts, and Montreal Alouettes.

We have been in operation as the CFL since 1958. But gridiron football, like rugby before it, has a long and storied history in our country. Our championship game, the Grey Cup, has been played since 1909. Today, it is one of the most watched events of any kind in Canada. Millions of Canadians attend CFL games each season and watch our games on TSN and RDS.

We join our fellow Canadians in facing unique and serious challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are exacerbated by the fact that our number one source of revenue is ticket sales. Safety concerns, while completely legitimate, have prevented us from hosting fans. (Other sports leagues, based in the United States and with access to gigantic markets, welcome fans but derive the biggest portion of their revenue from television and streaming rights.) The loss of revenue from our live gate forced us to cancel our entire 2020 season. We are currently hoping to return to play this year.

Our need to recover and rebuild from the pandemic is expected to extend beyond the current crisis and into future years. This has only heightened our desire to find new and innovative ways to engage the interest of our traditional fan base and, just as importantly, attract new fans. This is one of the major reasons we are advocates for Bill C-218.

We signed our name to the joint league statement that was issued in 2020 supporting an amendment of the Criminal Code to allow the provinces to offer betting on single sporting events. We believe it is the right thing to do. Sports betting gives our fans another exciting way to experience our game. We know it is





particularly popular with younger sports consumers. This group is vitally important to our future as we work to attract a new generation of fans. For us, this form of wagering can be a vital economic tool.

We acknowledge that wagering can engender concerns which must be addressed. We have confidence in the ability of the provinces to work together, and work with us and others, to regulate this activity in the public interest. We know that, with the advent of online technology, this activity is already taking place without proper, made-in-Canada regulation. The time is come to harness the benefits of single event wagering while putting in place the safeguards needed to protect the integrity of sport, the well being of our athletes and the interests of Canadian consumers.

For example, we expect:

- strict age restrictions and broad access to programs that encourage responsible games and self- exclusion;
- requirements that leagues, operators, gaming regulators and law enforcement to work together and share information to combat those seeking to compromise the integrity of competition;
- prohibitions on players, coaches and officials from betting on games;
- and protections for athletes, which the CFL and other leagues would support through extensive security protocols.

It is important to note that we have already put extensive safeguards in place on our own to protect our players and our games from corruption. Of course, we are willing to work with authorities to build upon them if necessary.

We support proper regulation for several reasons. The integrity of competition means everything to us. We have an obvious self-interest in protecting our content and intellectual property from theft or misuse. Most importantly, we have a long history of serving our communities on issues such as food security, gender-based violence, healthy lifestyles, and the power of sport to teach important life lessons to our youth. We want the places we play, and the country we call home, to be safe and strong.

In conclusion, a legal and regulated sports betting market in Canada would be beneficial to the CFL and our fans. We ask the Committee to support C-218 and we urge all members of Parliament to move forward with this legislation. Once again, thank you for your consideration of this bill, your interest in our league, and, above all, your service to Canada.

Yours sincerely,

Randy Ambrosie, Commissioner
Canadian Football League

