

THE H.B.P.A. of ONTARIO  
Administrative Office  
135 Queen's Plate Drive, Suite 420  
Toronto, Ontario M9W 6V1



Telephone: 416-747-5252  
1-866-779-3067  
Fax: 416-747-9606  
www.hbpa.on.ca

**Representing the Thoroughbred Horsemen and Horsewomen of Ontario**

March 9, 2021

### **Ian Howard Submission**

I have been involved in the horse racing industry in various capacities since 1972. During that time, I have worked as a groom, an assistant trainer, and have had a trainer's license since the early eighties.

I recently after a nearly 40-year absence accumulated enough credits to earn a B. A. In Political Science from York University. My original intention had been to study law but somehow the appeal of long, poorly paid hours labouring at the racetrack held more appeal. My father, a litigator of some note, told me that I was the smart one in the family. There have been many times I have wondered if there wasn't a tinge of irony in that judgement.

The backstretch is a place where people with little education or an extensive skill set can thrive. It demands an uncommon commitment to the horse. It is hard, but rewarding work requiring a team approach to caring for animals that often stretches from 3:30am until late at night.

During my career I have worked beside summer students, people recently released from jail looking for a fresh start, and people well into their eighties, there is a place for nearly everyone. The moment that probably decided my future was watching Secretariat's final race at Woodbine. I have included the link not just to indulge a nostalgic yearning for the past when racing was the only legal form of wagering but as an illustration why a large worldwide community is still passionate about horse racing.

<https://youtu.be/Ow2LcVdijt8>

What we are discussing here today is the inevitable erosion and ultimate demise of horse racing in Canada. The legislation as currently constituted allows for provincially licensed entities to provide and profit from wagering on horse racing without the associated costs of development and staging that a well-regulated and managed industry demands.

Horse racing unlike other sports events has a singular revenue stream. Unlike basketball, football, and other sports there are no significant revenues from ticket sales or media rights. The parimutuel takeout is the means by which, venues for training and competition and the purse structure necessary for conducting racing are financed, additionally government support has been necessary to assure horse racing remains an attractive wagering opportunity both locally and with an international base of clients. That client base is not insignificant, as half of the wagering in Ontario is generated outside of Canada.

Experience with bookmakers and offshore gambling sites has repeatedly demonstrated that free from the associated costs of staging racing these entities can offer significantly better odds and that enables them to cannibalize legitimate wagering activity. This cannibalization has and continues to be a significant impediment to overall health of the horse racing industry. The consequence of Bill C-218 is to further add to the hardship by allowing provinces to further erode parimutuel handle by providing a legal wagering alternative that has a distinct and unfair competitive advantage. Free from the costs necessary to operate racetracks these entities will inevitably attract customers by offering significantly better wagering terms.

In Ontario this means that the investment the Province has made in the jobs and economic activity provided by racing will become increasingly more tenuous fiscally and less likely to be sustainable. The potential for one province to gain from another provinces investment without cost or agreement is not a viable approach except on an extremely short-term basis. It is for this reason and others presented by Sue Leslie that we ask you to revert back to the language in Bill C-13 that originally considered an exception for horse racing. We believe it is fundamental to the future of horse racing and also sound legislative policy as it prevents inevitable conflicts between those provinces that support horse racing for the economic and societal benefits it provides and those provinces which will see it as another cost-free wagering product.

In conclusion exempting horse racing does not guarantee the industry's future. It merely returns it to the provincial arena where horse racing can use its infrastructure and expertise to provide a quality gaming experience to the benefit of the provinces and the livelihoods of those who make their living in the industry. This can only happen if horse racing retains its current market share. The legislation as now contemplated makes that impossible.

Ian Howard – HBPA Member