



Ontario Horse People,

I hope you are well and staying safe.

It is always a great sign that spring is near when the Woodbine Racetrack Backstretch reopens. That is especially true this year considering the 2020 Thoroughbred meet was cut short, and Standardbred Racing at Woodbine Mohawk Park, as well as at Western Fair Raceway, Rideau Carleton Raceway and Flamboro Downs just recently resumed.

It is my sincere hope that we do not have any further interruptions to horse racing in Ontario and I have a few updates to share on our efforts in that regard, in addition to some other positive news for our industry.

### **Advocating for Ability to Race during Future Lockdown (should there be one)**

In the last update I shared with you on February 5, I stated we were advocating for the safe return of racing. Well, now that racing has resumed throughout the active tracks in Ontario, that doesn't mean our job is done. We are continuing our efforts, which includes discussions with government officials, to advocate for the ability to safely race during a future lockdown, should there be one. The OLG is also advocating on our behalf.

As part of these efforts, Ontario Racing issued a [news release earlier this week](#) thanking the government for their efforts in the fight against COVID-19 and for the ability to recently resume racing. The news release also publicly stated our industry's desire and request to race should the province or a region be locked down once again in the future. If you have the opportunity to speak to your local MPP, please continue to advocate on the industry's behalf.

### **Resumption of Racing at Ontario Tracks**

As mentioned, live racing recently resumed at Flamboro Downs, Rideau Carleton Raceway, Western Fair Raceway and Woodbine Mohawk Park. While field sizes have been lighter than usual, handle has been strong and we expect it to build as more horses return to racing.

Here's a closer look:

RACETRACK	FIELD SIZE (since Feb 16)	FIELD SIZE (Apr – Dec '20)	% CHANGE	\$/RACE (since Feb 16)	\$/RACE (Apr – Dec '20)	% CHANGE
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Flamboro Downs	6.8	8.2	-17%	\$27,887	\$31,350	-11%
Rideau Carleton	7.5	7.6	-1.3%	\$27,736	\$21,847	27.9%
Mohawk Park	7.8	9.1	-14.3%	\$191,240	\$193,016	-0.9%
Western Fair	6.6	7.8	-15.4%	\$39,515	\$41,725	-5.29%

## Opening of the Backstretch at Woodbine Racetrack



*Holyfield, trained by Catherine Day Phillips, arrives to the Woodbine Backstretch on February 24, 2021. Photo by Michael Burns.*

Earlier this week the first horses were shipped into the Woodbine Racetrack Backstretch, which included Holyfield, the soon to be four-year-old who broke his maiden last year at Woodbine and competed in The Queen's Plate.

As part of the re-opening of the backstretch, our Racing Office has shared our COVID-19 Prevention Protocols as a reminder, as well as informing horse people of the potential for the Provincial Government to inspect places of business, including racetracks, to educate and ticket businesses and employees who are not complying with

COVID-19 health and safety requirements. This could result in fines of \$750 for individuals not in compliance.

In addition to the potential for provincial fines, it is absolutely critical that we all work together to protect our live racing programs by following all COVID-19 Prevention Protocols to keep the virus at bay. An outbreak at a racetrack could result in a stoppage of racing.

### Quarantine Rules

With racing resuming at Woodbine Mohawk Park and the backstretch opening at Woodbine, we have shared with horse people our updated quarantine rules. Please review these rules to ensure you understand them should you, or someone on your team, be returning to Ontario from outside of the province.

The quarantine rules for Woodbine Mohawk Park will be shared shortly. Here are the [Woodbine Racetrack Quarantine Rules](#).

### Mohawk Million II

We [excitedly announced last week](#) that we have sold all nine slots to the second edition of the Mohawk Million. Look for an announcement in the coming days to disclose this year's slot owners. The Mohawk Million is a race that impacts many avenues of our industry and brings notoriety to our sport. On behalf of our entire team at Woodbine, I'd like to extend a special thank you to the owners that have purchased slots and are helping support a race that raises the prominence of our world class sport. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Jessica Buckley, Bill

McLinchey and our entire team for persevering in pulling this event together in spite of these challenging times.

## **Sports Betting**

The potential legalization of sports betting in Canada continues to evolve quickly. Last week, Private Members Bill C-218, an act to amend the Criminal Code of Conduct regarding sports betting, was voted on and passed overwhelmingly at second reading in the House of Commons. Through discussions with various government officials, we are confident that Private Members Bill C-218 will adopt language through the legislative process to protect the long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry. This process includes committee hearings which will provide our industry an opportunity to speak to the importance of protecting horse racing and the tens of thousands of jobs it supports. Earlier this week, Bill Ford, General Counsel for Woodbine Entertainment, held a video conference call with more than 20 industry participants who may be asked to be a witness during these committee meetings which started this week and will continue in the weeks ahead. Thank you to everyone who is using their voice to help our industry get the protection it rightfully deserves.

## **HPItv Free Preview for March**

In partnership with Ontario Racing, we are offering a free preview of HPItv for Bell TV subscribers starting on Monday for the entire month of March. This will expose live horse racing to more than two million households across Canada. It's another great opportunity to promote our sport to new fans. Be sure to tell your friends and share on your social networks once our promotions are online.

It's an exciting time in our industry. We have horse racing back at four tracks across Ontario and the Woodbine Racetrack backstretch has reopened. I am very optimistic about the potential for a great year of racing. Thanks to all of you in advance for your ongoing cooperation in following COVID-19 Prevention Protocols at all racetracks. Let's continue to race safely and avoid any future disruptions.

Thank you and be safe,

Jim Lawson