

March 14, 2012

Brian Tropea
President of Ontario Harness Horse Association
35 Crawford Crescent
Campbellville, Ontario
L0P 1B0

Dear Brian,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The information you and Ken Hardy provided filled in our understanding about this important matter.

As President of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), I have the privilege and responsibility of representing 130,000 members across this province. Most services that contribute to the quality of life in Ontario are provided (in whole or in part) by OPSEU members.

OPSEU members work at both the Windsor Raceway and Rideau Carleton racetracks.

We join you in deep concern over the McGuinty government's attack on the horse racing industry. How can the elimination of over horseracing 60,000 jobs possibly benefit Ontario's financial situation? More shocking is the government's failure to have a sustainable plan to replace these jobs or retrain those about to be laid off. Many of these people have spent their life in this industry and will likely never find other employment.

The government's action is an assault on rural Ontario. It cannot go unchallenged.

Finance Minister Dwight Duncan described the partnership between your organization and the OLG as a subsidy. He has spun this into a conflict between wealthy race track owners against health care and education. This is an untruth.

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To have a future based on quality public services and prosperity rather than austerity Ontario must focus on retaining and increasing employment. This was underlined in a letter to the Premier I recently co-authored with Wayne Fraser, Director of District 6 Steelworkers. We proposed a round table meeting with business, labour and government so that together, the groups that make Ontario work could respectfully develop an industrial strategy, designed to ensure a future economy where many (not few) would participate and prosper

The recent OLG announcement to close tracks and privatize is another short term cash grab. The Liberals fail to recognize that Ontario's financial crisis is based on a lack of revenue, rather than just an excess of spending. The revenue problem can only be addressed by a fair, progressive and responsive tax system. By addressing the revenue side Ontario can develop a balanced approach to emerge from debt and deficit.

Government's plan to move casinos to urban centres is more than an assault on the horse industry. It shows that the Liberals have no problem preying on the needy, vulnerable and retired who throw money into casino slot machines and games with the dream of hitting it big. Shame!

As OPSEU builds working class and community coalitions across this province, I look forward to working with you and your team.

It's coming down to the wire, but though teamwork longshots can come through. I'm betting on the people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "T".

Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President
Ontario Public Service Employees Union

WT:tf