



**Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

**Ontario AgriCentre**

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**ONTARIO  
EQUESTRIAN  
FEDERATION**

August 28, 2012

Hon. Ted McMeekin  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
77 Grenville Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister McMeekin:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and the Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF) are very appreciative of your initiative to appoint the Horse Racing Industry Transition Panel to develop a vision for the future of the horse racing industry.

In our view the panel has done admirable work, objectively assessing the realities of the industry and offering important recommendations. By far, the most striking finding is:

*"Without slots revenue or a new revenue stream, the horse racing industry in Ontario will cease to exist."*

Minister, we do not believe this outcome was the intent of the Ontario government when it announced the end of the Slots at Racetracks Program (SARP). We hope you agree with the panel that the racing industry is an important cultural asset and a vital economic driver for Ontario and should not be lost. Prompt action is required to ensure a sustainable horse racing industry.

Experience shows that horse racing industries are easily lost and difficult to re-establish. The announcement to end SARP has already had significant impact on the industry. Breeders have reduced or shut down breeding programs, investment has ceased and further liquidation is planned. We will soon see the impacts on those employed in the industry and on the estimated 13,000 racing horses that will have no future.

If you agree with the panel that the industry is worth preserving in a sustainable way then it is incumbent on the government to provide a clear signal to the horse industry that it is here to stay. We strongly recommend the government of Ontario immediately develop and announce

an interim plan to sustain the industry while a long term, accountable and transparent program can be put in place to transition to a sustainable industry in keeping with the report of the panel.

Our organizations are prepared to assist in any way we can. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss these issues. The horse racing industry is critical to the well being of rural Ontario and the entire equine industry. Action is needed now to secure its future.

Sincerely,



Mark Wales, President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Allan Ehrlick, President  
Ontario Equestrian Federation

c: Sue Leslie, OHRIA