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# Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

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Chair: Ms. Iqra Khalid





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Today, Mr. Masse is replacing Mr. Garrison. Mr. Masse is appearing in person. Mr. Waugh is replacing Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Kusmierczyk is replacing Mr. Kelloway. Welcome to the three of you.

For the first hour, Mr. Brassard will be replacing Mr. Moore. Welcome, Mr. Brassard.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I'll outline a few rules. Members, you all know this. Witnesses, we're hoping that you'll get familiar with them.

Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of the screen of floor, English or French. Members and witnesses, you may speak in the official language of your choice. With the latest Zoom version, you don't need to select the corresponding language channel. Just select the one that you'd like to listen to.

Please familiarize yourself with the “raise hand” function at the bottom of the main toolbar, in case you need to alert me or Mr. Clerk. Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself.

Mr. Brassard, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification officer. Please ensure that you're following the guidelines for mask use and health protocols while you're in the room.

When people are not speaking, please ensure your microphone is on mute. This is a reminder that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair. I would ask you to please speak slowly and clearly, so that the interpreters have a good time translating and interpreting what you're saying.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

Appearing as an individual, we have Chris D. Lewis, a retired commissioner of the OPP. From Racetracks of Canada Inc., we have William Ford, president. From the Woodbine Entertainment Group, we have Jim Lawson, chief executive officer, and Christina Litz, vice-president, media and business development.

Each of the witnesses will have five minutes to make opening remarks. I have with me a one-minute card and a 30-second card, so that you can keep time with your remarks and we can make sure that the meeting goes as smoothly as possible.

Welcome to the witnesses.

We'll start with Mr. Lewis, for five minutes.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis (Retired Commissioner, Ontario Provincial Police, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for inviting me here today to provide some commentary regarding Bill C-218. My name was put forward as a potential witness by the Canadian Gaming Association.

One of the arguments made in favour of decriminalizing cannabis in Canada similarly applies to the sports wagering issue. It's a product that millions of Canadians spend billions of dollars illegally to obtain. It is estimated that Canadians spend \$10 billion annually through illegal sports betting operations controlled by organized crime.

In December 2019, the Ontario Provincial Police organized crime enforcement bureau broke up a Hells Angels-controlled illegal gambling ring in southwestern Ontario that earned \$131 million over a five-year period. Based on the average profit margin of 5% to 6% for a sports book operation, this single organized crime operation would have accepted close to \$2.5 billion in illegal wagers over that five-year period.

The OPP alleged that Hells Angels members controlled the illegal gambling ring through five websites. Many of the gamblers utilizing these sites would not understand that the sites were controlled by an organized crime group.

It is important to note that with the organized crime illegal gambling model come criminal turf wars, resulting in assorted violent crimes right up to and including murder. There have been a number of gangland murders in the greater Toronto area alone over the past several years related to the control of illegal gambling marketplaces, including shootings, arson and fire bombings.

There is a severe public safety risk related to that activity, as well as tremendous financial costs associated with responding to, investigating and prosecuting such acts of violence. In addition, investigating organized crime group activities is extremely resource-intensive from human, technology and operational funding perspectives.

According to a 2019 report from Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, or CISC, illegal bookmaking exists in every single region of Canada. While the exact size of the illegal sports book market is not known, it is believed to be significant. Some estimate it is in excess of \$10 billion annually.

There are several examples of large-scale illegal betting operations run by organized crime having been broken up by law enforcement. These activities provide revenue to organized crime groups that allow them to fund a variety of other criminal activities.

The public report on organized crime in Canada highlights the use of illegal gaming operations by organized crime groups as a high-profit, low-risk market. It states on page eight:

[Outlaw motorcycle groups] collaborate with other [organized crime groups] in the importation of cocaine and other illicit drugs, and have networks stretching across Canada that facilitate their well-established distribution lines. They are criminally associated to groups that form the [traditional organized crime] network, and are involved with [organized crime groups] involved in illegal online gaming....

On page 12, the report says:

Gaming networks generate millions of dollars of revenue each year, and [organized crime groups] involved in this market use these illicit funds to finance other forms of criminality, such as drug importing and trafficking.

For individual bettors, dealing with organized crime in terms of sports betting brings additional personal risks. Organized crime groups will provide loansharking and allow individuals to far exceed their financial capacity at exorbitant criminal interest rates. Then they will hang the threat of physical violence and other forms of extortion over the borrowers' heads to ensure the repayment of accumulated debts in a timely way.

The Government of Canada has made it a priority to develop new policy and legislation to reduce organized crime activity. The Prime Minister's 2019 ministerial mandate letters for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada included statements to that end.

The Government of Canada cited that one of its primary reasons for legalizing cannabis was to eliminate the criminal element and reduce organized crime's access to the large profits generated. It's time to apply that same logic to sports wagering and pass the amendment to the Criminal Code to permit single-event sports wagering.

The majority of Canadians who engage in sports betting believe they are engaging in a fun and harmless activity, as it is often presented as being legal and respectable. They are often unaware of the significant profits criminal organizations make as a result.

Bill C-218 will allow for greater regulation and oversight to ensure that Canadians are wagering in a safe and secure environment. A legal, regulated sports betting marketplace will provide the gam-

bler with a safe and secure environment to bet in and the confidence that appropriate, responsible gambling measures are in place.

• (1105)

For more than three decades, Canadian provincial regulators have demonstrated an extremely strong track record in overseeing the development of industry-leading consumer protection safeguards, resulting in safe and responsible regulated gambling environments for Canadian players—

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I apologize, Mr. Lewis. That brings you to a little more than five minutes, but I'm sure we will get the rest of it.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** I'm sorry. I wasn't looking up.

**The Chair:** That's okay. Thank you.

We will now go to Racetracks of Canada Inc., with William Ford.

Please go ahead, sir. You have five minutes.

**Mr. William Ford (President, Racetracks of Canada Inc.):** Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Bill Ford, and I'm here today on behalf of Racetracks of Canada. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Racetracks of Canada is a national organization representing over 40 racetracks across the country. Some are large like Woodbine in Toronto, but the majority are smaller seasonal tracks that play vital roles in their respective communities, many of which are in rural Canada.

Before turning to my substantive comments, I would like to provide some key statistics from a 2019 Jockey Club of Canada report on the Canada-wide economic impact of horse racing and breeding: \$2.9 billion in value-added GDP; 56,000 full-time equivalent jobs; \$2.1 billion in wages and salaries; and \$1.2 billion in tax revenues to all levels of government.

I'm not here today to speak out against the sports betting bill. Over the last several months, our industry has stated its support for the legalization of fixed odds, single-event sports wagering in Canada. The horse-racing industry is particularly well suited to speak to the benefits of legal and properly regulated wagering in Canada. Black and grey markets benefit nobody.

However, it is vitally important that the legislative process considers the unintended consequences should the horse-racing industry not be protected.

Today, the horse-racing industry's business model is supported by parimutuel wagering. Section 204 of the Criminal Code establishes the parimutuel wagering system on horse racing when regulated and approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Under the ministry, the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, commonly referred to as the CPMA, has been set up as the industry's regulator.

The parimutuel system works as the house takeout is used to sustain the industry through payments to participants. Further, to obtain a parimutuel betting permit from the CPMA, a racing association must show that it has an agreement in place with its local horse people's group. This ensures that all stakeholders are invested in the parimutuel model.

Private member's bill C-218 as currently drafted could allow provincial lottery schemes and other licensed organizations to offer fixed-odds betting on horse racing. This could be done without any contributions back to the industry.

Bill C-13, which was another bill recently introduced by the federal government to legalize fixed-odds single-event sports wagering, included language that would prohibit any organization from accepting a fixed-odds wager on horse racing, ultimately protecting the industry from the risk highlighted earlier. We are strongly asking for the same protection in Bill C-218. Our industry and stakeholders need it.

That said, we can see the writing on the wall. The legalization of single-event sports betting will see the influx of massive foreign companies and leagues entering the Canadian wagering market. Competition will be severe, and racing will see market share shrink over time. It could potentially result in the closure of some tracks, which are already on the brink of financial non-viability, and the loss of thousands of jobs.

To that end, we are also requesting that historical horse racing be legalized. Historical horse racing is a parimutuel gaming product where individuals can place a wager on the outcome of races that have occurred in the past. Historical horse racing is currently prohibited by the Criminal Code, despite its being a proven and legal product in many jurisdictions.

With a simple change to the Criminal Code to allow for bets to be taken on an event that has taken place in the past, historical horse racing could be quickly introduced into the market, and would provide the entire horse-racing industry with a substantial and much-needed new revenue stream. This stream would be particularly beneficial to the smaller tracks that only run seasonally for a few weeks a year.

The industry has been speaking to the CPMA for years about the possibility of introducing historical horse racing to Canada. The CPMA has stated it is prepared to regulate it as a parimutuel wagering should the Criminal Code be amended.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, the horse-racing industry and Race-tracks of Canada are supportive of the legalization of sports betting in Canada. However, it cannot be at the expense of a well-established industry that supports thousands of jobs and is the lifeblood of many rural communities.

Done correctly, single-event sports betting can create new jobs for Canadians and generate new revenues for the government all while protecting another industry, the horse-racing industry.

Thank you.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ford. That was five minutes on the dot.

We'll now go to the Woodbine Entertainment Group, with Mr. Lawson and Ms. Litz.

Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Jim Lawson (Chief Executive Officer, Woodbine Entertainment Group):** Good morning, Madam Chair, members of the committee and other attendees. I'm Jim Lawson, the CEO of Woodbine Entertainment Group. My colleague Christina Litz and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this morning.

Woodbine Entertainment is the largest racetrack operator in Canada. I believe it is critical for this committee to understand our organization's mandate. Operating like a not-for-profit organization, our sole mandate is to sustain the horse-racing industry in Ontario. We do not have any owners, nor do we have any shareholders. We operate to ensure that the horse-racing industry in Ontario, which also supports the entire horse-racing industry in Canada, is sustainable.

All income is reinvested in our core operations and other strategic initiatives intended to benefit and serve the entire industry. In short, we feel we are here today representing the entire horse-racing industry in Canada.

I'll turn it over to my colleague Christina Litz for further words.

**Ms. Christina Litz (Vice-President, Media and Business Development, Woodbine Entertainment Group):** Good morning, committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I'm new to the horse-racing industry. I joined Woodbine Entertainment just over a year ago, after leading marketing, digital and strategy at the Canadian Football League. In years previous to that, I was with some of Canada's leading media companies.

One of the things I loved most about being at the CFL was, in essence, that it was a mission-led organization uniting the country with one of its greatest traditions. Little did I realize, and what I hope we can share with you today, is how important the horse-racing industry is to Canada, both because of the tradition of the sport but now, even more importantly, because of its positive economic impact in our country.

The horse-racing industry generates approximately 50,000 full-time equivalent jobs across rural and urban Canada and contributes billions of dollars annually to the national economy. The production, care and racing of horses have economic benefits flowing through several sectors, including agriculture, entertainment, tourism, manufacturing and gaming. These jobs go well beyond the athletes and include trainers, grooms, riders, farmhands, veterinarians, harness and saddle makers, blacksmiths, and hay and grain suppliers, among many others.

Over the last several months we have publicly stated our support for the legalization of fixed-odds single-event sports wagering in Canada. You may be surprised to know that this industry is an innovative one, one that understands the evolving way in which the next generation of sports fans are engaging with sports.

However, it is vitally important that the legislative process considers the unintended consequences the horse-racing industry could experience should it not be protected.

Jim.

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** Thank you.

Currently the only backbone for the horse industry's business is parimutuel wagering. The industry operates the only legal single-event sports betting in Canada today, and it allows racetracks to earn income from legal wagers that are used to cover the substantial costs to produce our content. The parimutuel wagering also allows for profits to be shared with horse people, horse associations, breeding programs and horse aftercare programs.

As you have heard from Bill Ford of Racetracks of Canada, parimutuel wagering is a betting system in which all bets of a particular type are placed together in a pool, with payouts determined by the sharing of the pool among the winning wagerers, while fixed-odds payouts are agreed at the time a bet is made. Fixed-odds betting has mass appeal to large wagerers. The new generation of wagerers and large wagerers have grown up betting on points spread, much like you see in the National Football League.

This distinction is at the heart of the gravest risk to the Canadian horse-racing industry as your committee considers sports betting legislation. If the private member's bill, Bill C-218, is passed with its current language, it will allow others to offer fixed-odds wagering on horse racing. The horse-racing market is a zero-sum game. Horse-racing wagerers who would access fixed-odds betting will move away from the Canadian parimutuel pools. This will dramatically cannibalize the Canadian horse-racing industry's market share, and these operators would earn the revenue without contributing to the substantial costs of producing our content.

In other major sports betting jurisdictions in the world, notably Australia, fixed-odds wagering on horse racing has surpassed parimutuel wagering. In both Australia, and more recently in New Jersey, one of the first to implement and coordinate horse racing with sports betting, the government has introduced frameworks to protect the horse-racing industry.

We are requesting that private member's bill, Bill C-218, adopt language to protect the horse-racing industry. To do otherwise will ultimately destroy our industry.

Bill C-13, recently introduced by the federal government, has language to protect the industry from this risk. It is now incumbent on the government to insert its own language in the private member's bill to save an industry and the livelihoods of more than 50,000 families across this country.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lawson.

Thank you, Ms. Litz. I'm sure the rest of your testimony will come out during questions.

We'll now go to our first round of questions, for six minutes each, starting with Mr. Waugh.

Please go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank Racetracks of Canada, Woodbine Entertainment Group and Mr. Lewis, the retired commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police.

I'm going to start mainly questioning Mr. Lewis, because when I looked at the previous bill in the last Parliament, this was the issue when I started formulating my thoughts on single-game event betting.

Mr. Lewis, you've been associated with the OPP for many years. When I saw that at least \$10 billion is bet annually through black market sport books in this country, including some, as you mentioned, through criminal organizations such as the Hells Angels, that was one of the most intriguing things to me. That was why I jumped on this bill. Provincial and territorial authorities are losing revenue because of this.

You touched on it a little bit with the arrest in 2019 of that organization connected with the Hells Angels in southern Ontario, but how big do you think the black market in single-game betting is in this country?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** It's tremendous, sir, without a doubt. I can't even begin to estimate the number of people—other experts out there would know—but there is a whole pile of Canadians who are betting and spending billions of dollars annually through systems now, which many wouldn't understand are, as I said, run by the Hells Angels or traditional organized crime groups—mafia, for lack of a better word.

It's happening anyway. As I said, much as with marijuana or cannabis legalization, the situation is that people are doing it anyway. The choice the government has is to pull it out of that murky, clandestine, illegal marketplace, which facilitates other organized crime activity through the funding they gather, and bring it into a well-regulated and well-controlled safe environment in which the government actually makes profits that they can turn back into community programs and other things.

Getting the Hells Angels and traditional organized crime out of it as much as possible—it will never end totally—is key.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** During Super Bowl week, we often hear of police raiding places. That seems to be the only time of the year that Canadians hear about this. There will be a raid during the week before Super Bowl week or on Monday or Tuesday leading up to the Super Bowl.

The basic threat to criminality in this country is really through unregulated single-game betting, I would think.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** It is. With it comes, of course, turf wars. Much as we would think that two drug dealers are fighting over the turf of one corner in a city somewhere to sell their drugs, the turf wars over the marketplace in illegal gaming have resulted in tremendous acts of violence.

What is the risk to the public? It is to some person sitting in a café in York Region when a bomb goes off that really had nothing to do with illegal gaming but is just a turf-war issue. Some of those huge impacts—from a violence perspective and then the illegal loansharking, and all the other things that come with that—provide so much criminal activity and so much funding for organized crime to allow them to buy guns and other things that they are of course involved in, such as human trafficking operations, that there's quite a jeopardy to public safety all around.

• (1125)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I was shocked by the five-year period you mentioned in your speech with \$131 million, and it took \$2.5 billion of unregulated betting just to get to that \$131 million.

When I looked at this bill in the previous Parliament, I often thought \$10 billion was short. I'm really fearful that if this bill doesn't proceed, this will escalate in Canada more than we've ever seen. To me, \$10 billion in the underground economy, and not only through the illegal websites that we're seeing offshore, is a major concern in this country that I think needs to be dealt with. That's why it's important to get this bill forward.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** I absolutely agree with you.

Right now we're having a meeting virtually. In these times, people are spending much more time on computers within their residences because of the COVID situation, obviously, and we don't know what the future brings around that other issue. How much of an increase is there going to be in this illegal gambling activity?

Having it properly regulated by the provinces, with the proper responsible gaming programs in place, along with education, etc., would I think be a big step forward.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** We're not going to get all \$10 billion that is bet in the grey or black market, but if this bill were to pass, we would be getting some of that money regulated.

Do you have an idea how much would be regulated out of the \$10 billion we're looking forward to?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** I do not. I don't have that expertise.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** The Liberals brought in the cannabis bill in 2019, I believe, so that's a couple of years ago. Is there any tracking from the cannabis industry as to where it is today versus where it was when it wasn't regulated?

Can we assume that for the illegal single-game sports betting, with a regulated system...? Is there anything that you can, with your experience in the OPP, relate with regard to the two of them, because the bills are pretty similar, when you look at cannabis and single-game betting?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** Without a doubt, organized crime will continue to profit. I don't know the exact percentages per se.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. We're out of time for Mr. Waugh, but hopefully, in the next round, Mr. Waugh will be able to pursue that.

We'll now go to Mr. Maloney, for six minutes.

**Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm actually going to pick up where Mr. Waugh left off.

Mr. Lewis, I have some questions for you. The premise that it happens anyway, that argument, can be applied to a whole bunch of different things. As you point out, it was used in the introduction to the legalization of cannabis legislation. It's a big part of the discussion here. You could apply it to all kinds of things. The reality is that you have to temper that with issues like safety, morality and other concerns. That's really what this is about. You'll agree with me that this law isn't going to solve the crime problem, because bad guys will find ways to do bad things.

Right now you can go to a bookie in Toronto, or anywhere, and place a bet, and he'll carry you for a while. You're not going to be able to do that with a legalized single-event sports betting facility. I don't think you'll eliminate it on that basis.

There are also going to be restrictions on the amount of money you'll be able to bet in a legalized system, which I don't think exists, at least not to the same extent, in an illegal one. On the flip side, you have good guys who are now trying to get into this business, because they want to get rid of the bad guys, but their motivation is making money and greed. You're seeing that now with some of the professional sports organizations. They're jumping all over this thing, because it's another revenue stream for them.

I'm in favour of the bill, just so you know.

Have all of these things been discussed, to your knowledge, with provincial authorities, who are going to be the ones regulating all of these things after the fact to make sure these safeguards are in place?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** Without a doubt. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, AGCO, which has a large OPP contingent in it that conducts investigations around the legal betting schemes and lotteries, etc., is well prepared to put systems in place very similar to what it has now on the other fronts that it oversees within casinos and lotteries. It's prepared for that, and responsible gaming is going to be a huge part of that.

You're right, sir. You're never going to eliminate organized crime. My argument on the cannabis front was that organized crime was always going to undercut. It was still going to make money.

There are a lot of issues, without a doubt, that are very similar between these two pieces of legislation or proposed legislation. Eliminating a whole pile of organized crime and eliminating people from placing bets they can't afford and borrowing money to do it, and then paying unbelievable interest rates and suffering threats of violence, etc., does differentiate. A lot of that will be eliminated, but not all. You're totally correct.

• (1130)

**Mr. James Maloney:** I could go down this road for a long time here, but I want to bring in Mr. Lawson, Mr. Ford and Ms. Litz, because this issue with respect to horse racing is pretty critical. I don't think anybody's intention was to in any way hurt the horse-racing industry and all the benefits that go with it. It's important that we address that issue.

One of the things that actually dovetails between the two issues is that if single sports betting is allowed, but the carve-out to protect the horse-racing industry is included, isn't there an issue about where people are going to go to place these bets? That's going to have some impact on it too, and this goes to the regulation issue, Mr. Lewis.

Somebody mentioned other people, foreign entities, coming in and getting involved. Am I going to be able to go to a betting shop on Bloor Street and bet on the Leafs game tonight, the Habs game tonight or a horse race? Is it still going to be restricted to venues like Woodbine and places that exist currently?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** Was that question directed at me, sir?

**Mr. James Maloney:** Actually, let's start with Mr. Lawson first, and then Mr. Ford and Ms. Litz.

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** Thank you.

Listen, I think that by protecting it as you suggest what it will require with these behemoth sports betting operators—most of whom, as we know, are foreign, and the names are familiar to us—is understanding their backgrounds. Most of those companies are in the United Kingdom. Many of them are in Australia. They've morphed into the United States in a big way.

They like horse racing, and they want to work with horse racing, so I do think that by protecting the horse-racing industry, as the government bill suggested, we'll have these sports betting operators working closely with the horse-racing industry. I think we'll be protected in that fashion, in that they want to offer parimutuel wagering as part of their sports betting offering. That's what they've done in the United States.

We expect that, with that protection, it will set up a framework within the provincial lottery corporations in terms of how it's managed and controlled, such that they will be working with us, as opposed to having operations completely distinct from horse racing.

**Mr. James Maloney:** Thank you.

I only have 30 seconds left. Does anybody else want to take a shot at that?

Mr. Lewis?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** I absolutely agree with what Mr. Lawson just said. The provincial gaming authorities will ultimately make those decisions. I think they'll make very reasonable decisions based on what's best not just for the industry but for government, for safety and for doing things in an environment that prevents crime from being involved.

As for how that rolls out exactly in the end game, I don't have any idea.

**Mr. James Maloney:** Thanks very much, all of you. I'm out of time, unfortunately, but I'm very grateful.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Maloney.

We'll now go to Monsieur Fortin.

Monsieur Fortin, please go ahead. You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

My question for Mr. Ford pertains to what has already been discussed. The people in the racetrack industry are concerned that, if Bill C-218 were to pass, they would lose revenue. Mr. Lewis spoke—and he isn't the only one who has done so—about the single-event betting done through the criminal network.

Mr. Ford, do you think that legalization would really affect racetrack revenue?

[*English*]

**Mr. William Ford:** Yes.

Today, the parimutuel model wagers about \$1.2 billion that is legal and goes through the CPMA. We're aware that there is a significant grey market area offshore where wagers go.

We would be very concerned if Bill C-218 came in unamended and fixed-odds wagering on horse racing were allowed. We could see that \$1.2 billion totally undermined and easily cut in half. Those people who have received the licences from the various provinces would be under no obligation to pay into the system. The whole entire system could therefore collapse upon itself.



We absolutely need these protections that were in the government bill, Bill C-13. With that, I think we can maintain the parimutuel system going forward.

That said, one of the things that we are telling all of our members is that you must work with your local provincial regulator. You must understand how it is going to roll out in your province and ensure that horse racing and tracks can play a meaningful role.

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Right now, single-event betting on horse racing is controlled by organized crime. Do you know what this means financially?

You said that, if Bill C-218 were to pass, about half of your \$1.2 billion in revenue would be affected. That said, have you estimated how much of that money is currently going to the black market, to criminal organizations?

[English]

**Mr. William Ford:** We don't have a great estimate. The grey market and the black market do not publish their numbers. We just know that anecdotally I can go on my computer and I can find 10, 12, maybe 13 sites that are selling the Woodbine, the Hastings or the Trois-Rivières signal illegally, and people are making bets through those sites and not paying anything into the system. I don't think I would be exaggerating to say it's probably north of \$200 million that is just disappearing right now.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** So the amount right now would be around \$2 million, based on a rough calculation. However, you're talking about half of \$1.2 billion. So that's \$600 million. I gather that you're estimating that the \$600 million or so currently going to parimutuel wagering would be directed to single-event betting. Government agencies or private companies would take single-event bets.

Is that right?

[English]

**Mr. William Ford:** Just to clarify, the number that is bet parimutuelly in Canada, legally through the CPMA, is \$1.2 billion today. We believe that if Bill C-218 were to come in unamended, there could be fixed-odds wagering legal in Canada and perhaps as much as half of that parimutuel number, \$600 million, could disappear and the industry would not benefit from that handle number.

You've asked me to also guesstimate what I think the offshore market on Canadian horse-racing products could be today, and I am saying I think it could be north of \$200 million.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Could you tell us a little more about where these figures come from?

I don't want to suggest that you're wrong, Mr. Ford. I think that you're probably right. I would still like you to tell us where these figures come from. How can you estimate that the potential market for single-event betting at racetracks is \$600 million a year?

[English]

**Mr. William Ford:** We know that the \$1.2 million is the true number from the CPMA. Our estimate that half of that could go away is really looking at foreign markets and using Australia as the example.

Mr. Lawson said earlier today that there fixed-odds wagering has actually surpassed parimutuel wagering. You wouldn't envision that it would occur at first instance, but looking at the history and the trajectory of fixed-odds wagering in other jurisdictions, I don't think it's unreasonable to say it could easily take half of that parimutuel number and that's where we're coming from there.

With respect to the offshore numbers, as I mentioned, they're not very free with their numbers. That's really more of a guesstimate on the true size of the black market.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Monsieur Fortin. That was an extra 30 seconds for you today.

We'll now go to Mr. Masse for six minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Masse. I know you're in the room, so you could just hit your mike.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all our witnesses who are here today.

I'll start with Mr. Lewis.

It's been 10 years since Joe Comartin and I were working on this. I remember Geoff Hall, his legislative assistant, doing some of the initial work with regard to the amount of revenues going to organized crime on this. It was more than just a freedom of choice with regard to an entertainment or a way of changing things. We saw the same thing happen with dice games. Previous to that, it was Shaughnessy Cohen and Joe Comartin who changed the legislation that allowed for dice games for craps because we basically saw illegal markets all over our community, especially on the border, where it was touching with organized crime.

If we don't pass this here, do you have any doubts that...? I think it's important. We think of organized crime as being in your backyard, your basement, the typical bookies and bullies and so forth, but it's much more sophisticated than that. It's online and it's being done in a different way from ever before.

Can you touch a little bit on this? Is if we don't do this and we subject ourselves to another 10 years of waiting, what's going to take place with regard to organized crime and having Canada being an outlier whereas the rest of the world has moved on?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** Thanks for the question, Mr. Masse. You hit the nail right on the head.

Most people perceive organize crime as a couple of guys wearing leather jackets, hiding in an alley somewhere and beating people up. That's folklore, old movie stuff. The reality is that organized crime groups are mostly not even seen. Particularly, we're talking about traditional groups such as the mafia and outlaw motorcycle gangs. They are the primary organized crime groups that are involved in illegal gaming.

These networks are huge. They're international. They're tied together. They often form partnerships to work together. At the same time, there are those wars that I spoke of, which will continue. We'll have more bombings. We'll have more innocent people hurt. We'll have millions and millions of dollars in police funding to investigate these events that are a threat to public safety, in addition to the potential loss of revenue, let's say, to government from not being part of this.

It's huge. It's going to get worse before it gets better. More lives will be lost. More money will be spent and not as much money gained, but it's going to happen anyway.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Yes, that's the thing. It's a revenue stream for other criminal activity. That is what worries me about this, especially with the United States where I am. There's obviously employment in our region that's important for our regulated operators like the casino and so forth, but it's also the fuelling of other options.

With your professional background, do you suspect, with the United States moving towards a regulated industry, that Canada will then become more of a centre for organized crime if we do not pass this? If we become the one state that does not have a regulated system for single-event sports betting, we will actually become a focal point for criminal activity that's pushed out of other regions.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** The organized crime groups are undoubtedly international. They don't recognize borders at all. Other than the physicality of having to cross a border at some point, when it comes to the online sites and whatnot that are doing this illegally, borders are not an issue. They will fill any gap. If there is more business to be had in Canada because of an unregulated system, then they will fill that gap. They will provide the service.

I think 15 U.S. states so far, and more to come, have regulated with similar legislation. They're going to look for the weak spots. If the weak spot is Canada and there's more money to be made here, they'll operate here.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** It's ironic because it was a New Jersey court case, but to think we're here because basically Nevada got a special pass because organized crime set up there to create the whole system. It's bitter irony that we're at this point in time.

I'm going to move really quickly to Mr. Ford.

You mentioned Bill C-218 and Bill C-13. The government's position on that.... We were part of...with Mr. Comartin and Mr. Hall drafting this current bill. Thanks to Mr. Waugh for taking it up.

The government bill was different from ours. I actually fought, ironically, to keep both bills alive. The government's position was that they were different. Not only did I deny them two opportunities to drop it in the House, but I spoke against it to the Speaker. The ruling has been that the two bills are too similar.

Do you have a specific amendment that you would want to have, because I think you have to convince the government of that? Even on that, the parliamentary secretary appealed to the Speaker to dismiss even my intervention on the floor of the House of Commons.

Do you have a particular remedy that you're looking for with regard to the situation that you're in?

• (1145)

**Mr. William Ford:** Yes.

I can't speak to the nuances of your House rules, but what we're very simply asking is this. Bill C-218 deleted a paragraph, and we're asking that this just be amended. It is paragraph 207(4)(b). We're asking that the language, as very specifically set out in Bill C-13, be adopted and dropped into Bill C-218.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Okay. That's just the straightforward remedy right there to your concern.

We heard testimony. I know I only have a few seconds, and I'll come back later. We heard testimony by the Department of Agriculture that the current system is just not sustainable. We had that testimony.

I know I'm out of time, Madam Chair. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Masse.

We'll now go to our second round of questions, starting with Mr. Brassard for five minutes. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to carry on with the cannabis situation that Mr. Lewis was talking about earlier. With the legalization of cannabis, we've heard from mayors and police chiefs across the province of the various loopholes that exist that are allowing for large marijuana grow-ops.

Mr. Lewis, where do you foresee some of the areas where organized crime might be able to, for lack of a better term, do an end around on government-regulated sports betting?

What are some of the loopholes they may try to use?

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** Good morning, Mr. Brassard. It's good to see you.

**Mr. John Brassard:** It's good to see you again.

**Mr. Chris D. Lewis:** I don't know. I think that, like the marijuana situation, they're going to still provide a service, because some are still going to go the criminal route. Those who can't afford to bet legally but can borrow money from organized crime groups will still go that way, so that's still a concern. It's important to note that it will not eliminate organized crime involvement, just like the marijuana situation, where they're not out of the business at all. It will certainly cut back because people will have a safe way to do it, but right now they don't, so they go that other route.

As to specific loopholes around that, through technology and different things, I don't know. I don't understand that piece of the business. However, I know in terms of alcohol and gaming in Ontario, just to use that example, provincial regulators are very tied to the industry and they'll know exactly what holes they'll need to plug. Then others will emerge, and they'll plug those holes as well and hope for the best.

**Mr. John Brassard:** Thank you, Mr. Lewis.

I want to go back to Racetracks of Canada and the Woodbine Entertainment Group.

Obviously, COVID has been difficult for every sector of every economy. Your industry has certainly felt the brunt of it as well. Maybe you could just speak to the committee in terms of the impact that COVID-19 has had on racetracks and the Woodbine Entertainment Group.

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** I'll take that, although I'm sure we're all capable of addressing it.

**Mr. John Brassard:** I'm sure you are.

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** We've suffered in a couple of major ways during the pandemic.

On one, I'll speak about Ontario. Woodbine Entertainment generates approximately 95% of the wagering revenue in the province. There are 15 racetracks in the province, and most of the wagering is on the Woodbine Entertainment product, both harness racing and thoroughbred flat racing. We were shut down in March, April and May on the harness racing side. Our thoroughbred meet in 2020 was scheduled to start in April and it also did not start until the first week of June, concurrently with our harness racing product. We were down a couple of hundred million dollars of wagering during that period.

Across the country, racetracks did not operate and we relied very much on simulcast wagering on other racetracks in the United States, which did operate. However, we were hurt substantially by not having our own product, which, as Mr. Ford mentioned, generates about \$1.2 billion for racetracks across the country.

Through a lot of hard work and marketing, we managed to convert a lot of people to the digital product. I say "convert" because, for most of the year, once we got started in June, we were not allowed to have spectators. That took a while, but ultimately we did catch up.

While we dug a huge hole for ourselves during the early months, our wagering through digital online wagering caught up, not on an annualized basis but on a year-over-year basis. We managed to end the year down. We didn't put a big dint in the hole that was created

earlier in the year, but we're confident that, as we look to 2021, we can run racing, which we're currently doing at Mohawk in Milton, and can run it without spectators.

• (1150)

**Mr. John Brassard:** Maybe you can expand on that a little, on some of the discussions you've had with the government with respect to this piece of legislation. I know you talked about a carve-out. What else have you been talking to the government about?

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** In particular, we've talked about just the ways in which we will potentially be able to integrate racing. One thing Woodbine Entertainment does is that we have the only digital footprint across the country. We work with every racetrack in the country with our online wagering and we are hoping to work with the sports betting operators as they come into Canada.

As I said earlier, they like horse racing. We are dealing with the regulators, primarily the AGCO in terms of how we can integrate, and integrate our systems with them, to make this work for racing. If we proceed and have protections that this is going to ultimately be a good thing for the industry because of our regulated status, our responsible gaming and our other issues, we will work with these large operators coming into Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lawson.

Mr. Brassard, that concludes your time.

We'll now go to Mr. Kusmierczyk for five minutes. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As this is my first time appearing before the justice committee, I want to recognize the tremendous work that the committee has done on this very issue. I went back to the testimony of the last couple of meetings, and the amount of ground that you have covered is tremendous.

I also want to recognize the tremendous work of my colleagues MP Waugh and MP Masse in advancing this really important bill for our region.

The southwest region of Ontario—southwest of the GTA—is the second-largest horse-racing region in Ontario, and there are about 6,000 jobs locally here. That's about one-third of the employment provincially. There are eight racetracks, for example, in Sarnia, Dresden and nearby Leamington.

I had a chance to talk to Bob McIntosh, who is a legend in the horse-racing industry and is from a family of generations of breeders and trainers inducted into the hall of fame, both on the U.S. side and on the Canadian side. When you talk to him, he talks about horse racing as a real rich ecosystem. He talks about how the horse-racing industry is a very labour-intensive sector that really supports a lot of direct and indirect jobs.

I just wanted to ask you, Mr. Lawson and Mr. Ford, if you could maybe talk a bit about it. Give us a sense of what goes into horse racing, of what types of businesses and jobs are supported and what some of the costs of running those operations are. I really just wanted to underline that.

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** Bill, I'll go ahead hesitatingly. You may want to add to it.

Listen, there's no question that it is a very labour-intensive industry. On the thoroughbred side when we run live racing at Woodbine, studies show that there are approximately 2.1 persons employed per horse. We expect to have 2,000 horses on the Woodbine backstretch within a month or so. There will be 3,000 non-Woodbine employees employed on the Woodbine backstretch alone, and that infrastructure is a little different from the harness side, as you described, in southwestern Ontario. Most of the employees there are on training centres scattered throughout southwestern Ontario.

There are 60 off-track facilities, training facilities, within 15 miles of Milton and in southwestern Ontario. It's very labour intensive and it goes everywhere from hay farmers to seed farmers to blacksmiths. Christina Litz mentioned it earlier. It is a very labour-intensive industry and a very important rural industry. It's the backbone of a lot of rural Canada.

This phenomenon has a long history of supporting jobs, and I think that's in large part why the Government of Ontario is so supportive of our industry—because of the 25,000 jobs that are represented in Ontario alone. It also has a vast employment market across the country. As Bill Ford mentioned earlier, there are vast economic spinoffs from the economics of this industry. That's why we're here today, to have this committee understand and be aware of the risks involved if this industry is not protected the way that the government bill came forward and protected our industry.

I don't think, by the way... We have had conversations with MP Waugh and MP Masse, and there was no intention to hurt the horse-racing industry. We understand that. This is now an opportunity to merge these two bills and to make sure of how this needs and deserves that protection in order to protect the families and the many livelihoods across this entire country.

• (1155)

**Mr. William Ford:** The only thing I would add to what Mr. Lawson has said is that it's quite unique. We have many tracks that are in big urban settings and employ a lot of people, but we're also massive job generators in the rural communities.

Also, I'd be remiss if I did not again address an earlier question on how COVID has hit the industry. It has been devastating. We have just recently heard that Marquis Downs is not going to run its meet for a second straight year because of the problems with COVID. I think Jim indicated earlier that it was this pivot to digital

that has saved the industry and has allowed us to keep the industry alive and keep those jobs going. These are very trying times right now.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** I know that I'm just about out of time—

**The Chair:** You are completely out of time, Mr. Kusmierczyk.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll now go to Monsieur Fortin for two and a half minutes.

Sir, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for Mr. Ford.

We all know that the gambling and lottery industry generates an enormous amount of money. This is certainly the case at racetracks. We understand the desire to protect the many jobs created by the horse-racing industry.

That said, problem gaming is a reality that must also be considered. Compulsive gamblers, who currently place bets on sites that are, in some cases, illegal or foreign, would spend their money on legal sites. In Quebec, this matter would likely be handled by Loto-Québec, which is investing money to combat problem gaming.

What is Racetracks of Canada doing about problem gaming?

[*English*]

**Mr. William Ford:** It's a very serious issue and one that we take very seriously.

The first most important thing is to address the black market and the grey market. People who are wagering offshore do not have the protections that we think the licensed industry has. We have our employees always taking this front and centre. It's educating our employees, our frontline staff, to identify people who may have an issue and to step in where necessary. It is something that we're learning to do more of and better now on the digital footprint—identifying patterns of problem gaming, and stepping in and taking those steps.

It is absolutely imperative to our business that problem gaming is addressed, and we take it seriously. As I said, I think the number one step would be to get rid of the grey market and the black market.

• (1200)

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Mr. Ford, can you tell us how many compulsive gamblers you have been able to help? Do you have any statistics, any figures for this?

We have a few seconds left.

[English]

**Mr. William Ford:** I can say that on a regular basis—probably once a month—we will turn somebody's account off, reach out to them and give them the name of a contact.

It is something that we take seriously and do regularly, but I don't have numbers.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ford.

**Mr. William Ford:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

We'll now go back to Mr. Masse, for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Lawson, you're absolutely correct. This is an important issue.

I saw it first-hand in my riding, Windsor, which lost its raceway because of a political decision by the McGuinty government to close it. It had a casino as part of it. It had \$2 million in profit. We had hundreds of jobs there that were directly providing services, and then there was the whole industry around it that was flourishing—the farms, the breeding, the notoriety, the connection to other communities and a cultural thing as well.

I think we're worse off. In fact, the Joy family ran that raceway for years and years, and now it's an empty parking lot. It's maybe slated for big box retail, but there's a development fight going on as well. We had an iconic industry, which was there not only for the horse racing but for all kinds of other things. That is now gone.

If we don't address your situation, what do you think is going to be the future? Again, the agriculture department said that they can't sustain the current situation. Do you think, though, with the proper support to get the provinces on side, we could get a solution here?

A lot of this is provincial. It's going to be regulatory. How do we ensure that you're going to get that?

**Mr. Jim Lawson:** I'm not familiar exactly with the discussions with agriculture. I think the CPMA does a great job of regulating the industry. In terms of the support, we work extremely closely with the AGCO on a regulatory basis.

In terms of protecting this industry, if our proposal to merge these two bills relative to horse racing occurs, I think there's an opportunity for working with the provincial regulators in each jurisdiction to support racing.

We contribute a lot out of our wagering dollars today to funding both the AGCO, on the horse-racing side, and the CPMA, and that will continue. As we have the potential to increase our wagering and increase our relationship, there's an opportunity to strengthen the regulators, and I think we'll be able to do that. I have high confidence that our contributions, at least in Ontario to the AGCO through wagering, will be able to sustain it. To go in the other direction—you're right—it risks destroying not only Windsor but all of the racetracks in Ontario. That's why we're here today.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lawson.

Thank you, Mr. Masse.

With that, I'd like to thank our witnesses for their testimony today.

We will now be moving on to our second panel. Before we do that, I'll just remind members that, as per our last meeting, we will need about 10 minutes at the end of our second panel to discuss some housekeeping, as well as some motions presented by Monsieur Fortin. Please do make arrangements.

The meeting is now suspended as we let in our next set of witnesses.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1209)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone. We'll resume the meeting. I'll just make a few quick comments for the benefit of the new witnesses who are here.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When you are ready to speak, you can click on the microphone icon to activate [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that you are on mute.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Interpretation is available at the bottom of your screen. Please select the language you would like to listen to. It doesn't matter what language you are speaking in as long as it's one of our official languages. When you are speaking, please speak slowly and clearly so that the interpreters don't have a more difficult time.

With that, I'd like to welcome our witnesses. We have with us three organizations.

British Columbia Lottery Corporation is represented by Mr. Stewart Groumoutis, who will be joining us very shortly. He is the director of e-gaming. We have Dr. Jamie Wiebe, who is the director of player health.

We also have with us Club Jockey du Québec, represented by Murielle Thomassin, who is the racetrack manager at the Trois-Rivières Racetrack.

Finally, we have Horsemen's Benevolent And Protective Association Of Ontario, represented by Sue Leslie, who is the president; and Ian Howard, who is a member.

For the witnesses, I have a one-minute card and a 30-second card. I'll be alerting you as to where you stand within the five minutes that you'll be allotted per organization to make your opening remarks.

We'll start with the Club Jockey du Québec.

Ms. Thomassin, please go ahead. You have five minutes.

• (1210)

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin (Racetrack Manager, Trois-Rivières Racetrack, Club Jockey du Québec):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hello, everyone. I am happy to be here today.

I am just going to speak to you a little bit about the situation that you are already well aware of.

I will speak in English. My English is not perfect, but I believe it is good enough. It is easier, I believe, for most of you who are English speaking.

Canada's horse-racing—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Excuse me, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Fortin.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** If I may, I just want to tell the witness that there are francophones on all the committees—I'm one of them—and that she's allowed to speak in the official language of her choice. She should understand that the interpreters will translate her remarks. I understand that it's easier for her to speak in French than in English. I think that it would be wise to let her speak in French.

Thank you.

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

I'll continue in English, if you don't mind.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Thomassin, please.

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** I don't want to switch back and forth. I'm really sorry about that, but I sort of prepared myself in English, so here I go. I will be fairly brief.

Canada's horse-racing industry generates approximately 50,000 full-time jobs across Canada. We have established that today. It contributes about \$5.6 billion annually to the national economy. From breeders to trainers to veterinarians and blacksmiths, the racing industry's impact is significant when it comes to jobs and economically speaking, but it is all possible because of parimutuel wagering. This is even more the case in Quebec as it is our only source of revenue.

Club Jockey du Québec was created as a not-for-profit organization in 2009 with a mission to sustain and grow the horse industry. Since its creation, the wagering from Quebec players on horse races

around the world is stable at about \$70 million a year, just in Quebec. From that, Club Jockey du Québec returns approximately 73% to the players with winning tickets using the parimutuel model. The rest is kept to pay taxes, federal and provincial, racetrack host fees and partners such as legal web platforms used by clients or betting parlours across Quebec. At the end of it all, we are able to present races at our local racetrack in Trois-Rivières and redistribute \$3 million of net profit to the industry.

I have a whole two pages to tell you about what parimutuel versus fixed-odds wagering is; however, I believe by now you understand the issue.

Basically I want to talk to you from my heart today, because the race industry in Quebec has suffered plenty in the past couple of years. In 2008 they called for the end of racetracks in Quebec, and as I just mentioned, in 2009 a few horsemen got together and realized they could not let that happen, so they created the Club Jockey du Québec. We now have races, about 40 cards a year, and we are pretty small. We are one the smallest, I believe, in the amount we are able to give back to the industry, the \$3 million, and in the number of race dates we have.

All that is to say that the proposed change to the Criminal Code will impact us no matter what. However, we want to protect the racehorse industry by suggesting that the wording the Criminal Code has should protect the horse industry and not allow single sports wagering events like fixed odds to be taken on horse races.

We want to keep our product. We want to promote our product and get bigger in the end, but we want to make sure you understand that this is the passionate province. We are here to stay and we will basically just enforce single sports wagering while protecting our industry.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Thomassin.

We'll go now to the British Columbia Lottery Corporation and Mr. Stewart Groumoutis.

I believe you are now here. Please go ahead. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Stewart Groumoutis (Director, eGaming, British Columbia Lottery Corporation):** Thank you.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Thank you for inviting the British Columbia Lottery Corporation to provide our perspective on Bill C-218, the safe and regulated sports betting act.

My name is Stewart Groumoutis and I'm BCLC's director of e-gaming operations. My colleague in virtual attendance is Dr. Jamie Wiebe, director of player health at BCLC.

We are pleased to speak to the committee today as you consider this bill to modernize the law in Canada so that sports bettors can finally legally access single-event betting in their own country, as well as the benefits and safeguards that come with that option.

To provide some background on BCLC, we conduct and manage commercial gambling in a socially responsible manner on behalf of the Province of British Columbia. This includes 16 casinos, 17 community gaming centres, 3,500 lottery retail and hospitality locations and PlayNow.com, B.C.'s only regulated gambling website, which currently captures approximately two-thirds of B.C.'s total online gambling market.

Since 1985, approximately \$25 billion from BCLC's revenues has gone back to the Province of B.C. to support important investments like health care, education and community programs.

Like previous speakers, we believe single-event sports betting is long overdue. We believe we can offer this product while supporting the health and safety of our players and mitigating gambling-related harms.

We know that B.C. players already make these bets, either south of the border in State of Washington casinos or on unregulated offshore websites, neither of which provide revenue or jobs that support British Columbia. In fact, we estimate that more than \$1 billion is wagered on sports annually in our province. The majority of the benefit of that wagering leaves B.C. as a result of the current laws.

We're asking for a level playing field. We're asking for the opportunity to offer single-event sports bets in a way that benefits our province and our players—through regulated player health, integrity and security safeguards.

In the short term, BCLC plans to first implement single-event betting on PlayNow.com and quickly create a new suite of sports betting opportunities for our customers. In the long term, at land-based casinos and community gaming centres, we're ready to work with our industry, regulator and government partners to introduce licensed sports books in key markets.

We'd also consider enhanced sports betting offerings at hospitality locations, providing a much needed economic boost to bars and pubs across B.C.

While this is a significant opportunity for our players and our province, we acknowledge that legalized single-event sports betting creates a responsibility to enhance the robust player health safeguards we already have in place.

We can tell you that providing the best player experience possible—while supporting the health and well-being of our players by reducing gambling-related harms—is at the forefront of how we work. In fact, our goal is that no one is harmed from gambling offered by BCLC. We're working towards this not only by encouraging healthy play but by making our products, environments and services safer for our players.

One way we do this is through player research to gain a deeper understanding of risks, current interventions and safeguards, as well as evidence of their effectiveness. Another way we do this is through our GameSense advisers. They are dedicated player health

specialists available to support players with informed decision-making and healthy play—or to refer them to treatment and support when needed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, and with B.C.'s casinos currently closed, we have enhanced these supports and have GameSense advisers available via telephone and online chat on PlayNow.com. In fact, PlayNow.com is the only online gambling website in North America, and it is one of the few in the world with dedicated player health specialists ready to support their customers.

You'll also recall from a previous speaker, Mr. Zane Hansen from SIGA, that our GameSense program is widely used by our provincial counterparts in Saskatchewan. It's also licensed in Alberta, Manitoba and several jurisdictions in the United States, including all MGM resort facilities.

For our commitment to continuous improvement and our evidence-based approach to player health, BCLC has received the highest level of certification—for the fourth time in a row—from the World Lottery Association. This certification is for excellence in responsible gambling programming.

If Bill C-218 is passed, BCLC and our Canadian regulated counterparts are well-positioned to offer single-event sports bets to players in a safe and responsible way.

As someone who has been with BCLC for more than 10 years, I know first-hand about the investments we have made in player health, the terrific player experience we offer and how much better it could be with single-event sports betting.

This is something our country is ready for. That's why we're urging you and your colleagues to work collaboratively to bring single-event sports betting to Canadian players and provinces.

Thank you.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association of Ontario.

Ms. Leslie and Mr. Howard, you have five minutes. Go ahead.

**Ms. Sue Leslie (President, Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association of Ontario):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I've been in the horse-racing industry and community for more than 40 years, and I currently have the privilege of being the chair and president of the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association. I've also held various other positions across the industry.

In 2012, I also had the privilege of being chair of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association when the industry faced a financial crisis due to the Government of Ontario's decision to end the slots at racetracks program, which at the time was the funding model used by government to support the horse-racing industry.

This one decision nearly killed the horse-racing industry. The industry seemed to be collapsing right before my eyes, and I won't go into the very sad details, including the welfare of the horses and the sheer worry of the thousands of families. Fortunately, we were able to show the government the devastation caused by this decision, and an alternative financial solution was provided.

I reference this time in our history only because while we support Bill C-218 and the legalization of sports betting, it reminds me of that devastation we faced and the potential devastation we could face again, with both horse racing and breeding, if the federal government does not include language to protect the industry, much as Bill C-13 did.

To further explain my significant concern regarding the unintended consequences the industry could face, it's important to understand that the costs associated with horse racing are substantial. This is true both for racetrack operators and for owners and breeders.

If it were permitted for an organization other than a racetrack operator to take legal, fixed-odds bets on horse racing without paying any of these substantial costs, then the business model the entire industry sits on would be completely broken.

Due to the investments made by horse owners and racetrack operators and support from the government, the horse-racing and breeding industry supports more than 50,000 jobs across the country. Many of these jobs are blue collar in rural Ontario. Most of these workers have spent their entire lives working on farms with horses and would have a difficult time finding another career should the industry be drastically reduced.

Our farmers, owners, trainers, breeders and caretakers are only a small part of the jobs and economic activity we create. We also employ veterinarians, blacksmiths, jockeys, contractors, trainers and physiotherapists. In addition, we build barns, arenas, fences and running sheds. We plough fields, we plant crops, and we buy tractors, vans and pickup trucks. We produce \$5.7 billion annually in economic activity. I would say this is an industry more than worthy of protecting. I want to reiterate the \$5.7 billion in economic activity and 50,000 jobs.

I've spent a fair amount of time speaking about the people and the families whose livelihoods depend on this industry. We must also consider the horses. The product is a living, breathing equine requiring 24-7 care, which is very labour intensive. If our people can't earn their living through horse racing, they will lose the income needed to take care of their livestock.

As an industry, we must do all we can to convince you that the language that protects the parimutuel bet must be reinserted into Bill C-218. If this wording is not reinstated in the bill, the horse-racing industry along with the 50,000 jobs it supports will be destroyed.

The horse-racing industry has a long and successful history of working with government and its agencies. We've established a good working relationship with the AGCO and the CPMA, which licenses racetracks and oversees the parimutuel betting. We are committed to continuing to work with both levels of government to

maximize the return to government while doing the same for horse racing.

Horse racing has a proud worldwide history. Canada has produced some of the greatest race horses that have ever lived, including the great Northern Dancer.

I believe our government has a responsibility and a duty to the industry and the 50,000 Canadians who make their living in rural communities to include language in the bill to ensure a vibrant horse-racing industry alongside a brand new sports-betting industry that could become equally productive in generating jobs and economic activity.

• (1225)

Respectfully, this is the right thing to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Leslie.

We'll now go into our first round of questions, for six minutes each, starting with Mr. Lewis.

Go ahead, sir, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

It was unfortunate that I didn't get to speak in the first round, because I would have loved to speak to Chris D. Lewis. I'm Chris B. Lewis. Actually, when I was vetted, Madam Chair, just for the record, they asked me if I was a commissioner. There's an OPP boat in my riding named after him, so everybody thought after I was elected that it was named after me. It wasn't, just for the record. Now it's on the record, and the slate is clear.

Madam Chair, you know me to be a very upbeat person, I believe. Today, I'm not so upbeat because just this past week we lost 200 more jobs. One factory and 200 more jobs were lost in Windsor-Essex. I always bring my hat back to say, "Okay, what are we going to do? How can we all work together and figure out a way around this to push it forward?"

First and foremost, to all the witnesses, thank you so very much. I want you to know that when I speak to you about this I'm speaking both because I'm an owner of two horses—although for barrel racing so nothing to do with the betting—and because my daughter and my wife spend so much time on their horses. My daughter wants to be a veterinarian. So much of what you've been speaking of hits home beyond belief. They're actually right behind me, but I won't show them there.

I really want the witnesses to understand that I know exactly what you're talking about with regard to how much it costs and those types of things.



For once, Madam Chair, I'm going to be greedy. I'm going to say that because we are losing so many jobs to the United States and to Mexico, and I'm just seeing hemorrhaging and bleeding beyond belief locally, that this conversation should be much larger than the horse-racing industry. It really has to be focused on how we ensure a secure path forward for all Canadians, be it the horse-racing industry or the single sports betting industry. I know, Madam Chair, that's what we're talking about today, but in my mind this is so much larger than that right now because, darn it, people deserve the very best.

I have a couple of questions. I'm sorry, but I'm very passionate today, as you can probably tell.

To Madam Thomassin, you mentioned \$5.6 billion to the industry and \$3 million back to the government. If this were to go forward—and I really hope it does, by the way—do you have any idea how much more revenue to the government this would produce and/or how much more help it would be for the horse-racing industry?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Actually, I would like to clarify something. When I mentioned the \$5.6 billion and the 50,000 jobs, that's not in Quebec. My first sentence was about Canada-wide; however, Quebec is much smaller.

We have about \$70 million in wagers every year. Of the \$70 million, 73% is given back to the gamblers or the clients. They get that money back from winning tickets. After that we pay 0.8% in federal taxes and 2.5% in provincial taxes, and then after that we have a bunch of commissions to give out to either tracks that are hosts, host tracks we call them....

Let's say we present a race, if the track is Woodbine, if the track is in the United States, we give back a percentage to that track. It's basically their fee. They make money off of it. It all trickles down to about 7% or 8% that we keep in our pockets, which is a bit more than \$3 million. Then we have the racetrack fees and my staff. I pay all kinds of expenses, and then after that the net profit in our pockets is about \$3 million a year.

We give \$2.5 million at the racetrack for 40 cards, and we give back about a half a million for fair races that are going across Quebec. It all trickles down. It seems super large, but then at the end see how.... A purse can be \$3,000, and the winner gets 50%, so the winner only goes back home with \$1,500 that week.

• (1230)

**Mr. Chris Lewis:** Perfect. Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I know that I have only one minute left.

Mr. Groumoutis, I don't know where you're at in B.C. I don't know whether you're in "lower-land" B.C., if that makes any sense. I do know that border issues have become quite an issue, but I'm really excited about this. I believe it will promote tourism. I truly believe there will be a lot of economic spinoff to this.

Do you have any idea what that impact might look like in B.C.?

**Mr. Stewart Groumoutis:** Yes. We estimate that an opportunity for between \$125 million and \$175 million in revenue is possible. To your point, we do believe that we can implement some destination sports-betting facilities that, as you mentioned, would poten-

tially have travellers coming from elsewhere in Canada or coming up from down south to participate in that. We know that we already have some destination casinos. Adding sports betting is just another element to drive that tourism.

**Mr. Chris Lewis:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Lewis.

We'll now go Mrs. Brière for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses today.

[*Translation*]

My question is for Ms. Thomassin.

First, on the day after International Women's Rights Day, I'd like to point out that you're one of the few women racetrack managers in Canada. I would also like to congratulate you on your work to further regulate the use of horse whips.

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Thank you.

• (1235)

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** In 2014, the Senate blocked Bill C-290, which was very similar to Bill C-218. The senators felt that there was too much potential for match fixing or for organized crime to infiltrate the world of legal betting by rigging sporting events, including horse racing. One concern was that horses would pay the price for this potential rigging with their health.

How would you respond to these allegations today?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Whether we like it or not, society is changing and so are we. We must always be careful when it comes to money. People will try to manipulate things and make a little more money. However, I foresee a much less bleak future.

We're regulated by the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, or CPMA, which conducts drug testing. As well, the Quebec alcohol, racing and gaming control commission is working with me on regulating the use of horse whips and drugs. This world is much more structured than you might think. I even received a memo recently stating that a test would be more restrictive to limit the unethical use of drugs on horses.

I worked a bit with an employee from the Quebec department of agriculture, fisheries and food, or MAPAQ. The employee couldn't believe how well we were set up at the racetrack in terms of animal health and safety. We need to work with a vision for the future of the new company in order to attract and retain customers. We must be upright and honest. Above all, we must respect the animal that we ultimately use as a tool.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Thank you.

More generally, are you noticing any negative impact on your industry as a result of the current ban on single-event sports betting?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** No. I think that the parimutuel model that we provide has been established for a very long time.

Sports betting could also be done at our place. However, as things stand now, in 2021, all we're asking is that our territory not be encroached upon.

We could potentially reach an agreement with the sports betting industry and establish joint initiatives. This could even be very positive for the industry.

Also, if we generate more revenue, since we are a non-profit organization, the industry would ultimately receive more revenue. This partnership is almost necessary.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Okay.

As you know, Bill C-218 would make single-event sports betting in horse racing legal. How would this affect your industry and, again, the health or treatment of horses?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** In Quebec, this industry is much smaller and more of a family affair. Mr. Lewis was saying earlier that his wife and child ride horses. For us, it's a similar situation. For people in Quebec, it's an industry, but it's above all a lifestyle and a passion. So I don't believe that there's a health risk for horses.

Sorry, but I forgot your first question.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** In general, how would the legalization of single-event betting affect the horse-racing industry?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** If you adopt the current proposal to remove the part of the definition of "lottery" in the Criminal Code that prohibits single-event betting, it will kill us. We won't be able to compete because people will be allowed to bet on our races. If the opposite is true and you decide to keep limiting horse racing to parimutuel wagering, it's still a form of single-event sports betting.

So it's really the wording that matters to us, because it can ruin us.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** In your opinion, who would benefit from the legalization of single-event sports betting?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** In Quebec, I believe that Loto-Québec and the major companies will benefit from the legalization. If we were able to come together to find a way to provide our service, that would be ideal, because it's inevitable. At this point, it's just a matter of knowing who will provide it and why.

Canada and Quebec can certainly benefit from the legalization, especially if the inequalities can be reduced at the same time. It would be good to collect the funds and then redistribute them to help sick children or homeless women, for example. Many organizations could benefit from these funds.

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Perfect. Thank you.

Lastly, I want to point out that Sherbrooke is the birthplace of Aimé Choquette, a great man in the world of horse racing.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go to Monsieur Fortin for six minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for you, Ms. Thomassin. However, I want to start by greeting you on behalf of your member of Parliament, Ms. Charbonneau, who would have liked to be here.

Ms. Thomassin, I gather from your presentation that you're concerned about the financial impact of potentially legalizing single-event sports betting. You aren't the only person to make this point. I'm not an expert in the field. However, I gather that single-event sports betting is already taking place, but the black market is benefiting from it. This is done through criminal organizations. It has always been that way and it probably will be that way as long as single-event sports betting is prohibited.

Bill C-218 proposes to legalize single-event sports betting. This would mean, for example, that Loto-Québec could manage bets on events that take place at your place, at the Trois-Rivières Racetrack. You're concerned that this would cost you revenue. However, you're already losing revenue to the black market.

Have you estimated the market share that goes to criminal organizations for single-event sports betting?

• (1240)

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Unfortunately, I don't have any statistics or data regarding the betting that takes place under the table. It's a little harder to pin down.

However, I want to make one thing very clear. I'm not against single-event sports betting. All I'm saying is that we don't want it to encroach on fixed-odds betting. These odds would be set by Loto-Québec, for example, which would manage single-event betting on our races in this manner. We provide parimutuel betting.

If the wording doesn't limit horse racing to parimutuel betting, it could result in only single-event betting on each horse race. That's really the source of our concern. That said, we know that single-event sports betting is coming, and we don't have any issue with that.

I don't have data on the black market. We know that there's illegal betting on our races. However, if single-event betting were legal, there may be even more of it. Some people have the sense to say that they don't make illegal bets. In any case, they may be less comfortable with it. If this practice is legalized and if Loto-Québec starts saying that you can bet on a single horse race, it could be devastating for us.

Yes, this practice is taking place and we all want to stop it. However, at the same time, if it becomes legal and we aren't protected, things could be difficult.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** In your opinion, if Bill C-218 were passed and the practice were legalized, couldn't the racetracks come to an agreement with Loto-Québec on revenue sharing? Ms. Leslie spoke earlier about the cost of maintaining horses, among other things. Couldn't some type of revenue sharing be arranged with Loto-Québec? Has this option been explored or discussed?

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** Good question. We're connected through an inside door to the Salon de jeux de Trois Rivières, so to Loto-Québec, in a way.

We try to get along with Loto-Québec. In the years leading up to the pandemic, Loto-Québec even sponsored us. We get along very well with these people. I think that a market share could be developed in betting theatres and gaming parlours. We provide the same thing. It's just that we could provide it together. Our betting theatres could offer sports betting. Historical horse racing could also be included.

Perhaps we would like to see the Criminal Code amended. We want to point out that everything is regulated by the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency. However, machines could be set up at Loto-Québec locations to raise some money and share the revenue. It's the same customers. Let's face it. We don't want to attract customers and monopolize them. Instead, we want to share the revenue in a fair manner.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Let's talk about customers.

Ms. Thomassin, in the gambling and lottery industry, problem gaming is an issue. It affects all types of lotteries. The horse-racing industry isn't exempt.

I want you to talk about what you and the Trois-Rivières Race-track are doing to combat problem gaming.

**Ms. Murielle Thomassin:** At the racetrack, we don't have many tools other than the tools on our website. However, we're working with the Woodbine Entertainment Group. They have a well-established platform for legal online betting on horse racing. They also have a good handle on this issue. They look at the accounts. They call me occasionally to say that they had to suspend the account of one of our customers. This rarely happens. More management is done on the web. At the racetrack, the betting amounts aren't high. The amounts are often \$2.

• (1245)

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you, Ms. Thomassin.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

We'll now go to Mr. Masse for six minutes.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to ask some questions of the B.C. Lottery Corporation.

One strength of Mr. Waugh's bill, and also one strength of the government bill, the previous Bill C-13, was that it didn't force the provinces to do any particular thing. It just gave them the capability to roll out products that some of their consumers would potentially like. As well, it also gave the power to take back some products if they found some issues related to them.

Could you speak a little to that, and also to some examples about what you do for gaming? Obviously we want to keep our focus on problem gaming as it rolls out. What do you do now? How is the flexibility that's being proposed here an advantage for a province?

Each province is a little different in terms of where they're at with this. That's one thing that I think is really underplayed. It's very much an important value that we don't make anybody have to do anything, and then each province can roll out how it goes about the next stage.

**Mr. Stewart Groumoutis:** First and foremost, around the products and what we would offer, I think you are correct that there are different levels of maturity in the different provinces, both online and through retail and casino facilities.

BCLC has quite a robust offering and quite a robust ability to deliver products. From an online standpoint, we would look to compete directly with the black market immediately. For the land-based, we see that, again, as a major opportunity, because we've heard for years that customers are looking for this. They want us to deliver this on their behalf.

In regard to the player health capabilities, I'll pass it to my colleague Jamie Wiebe to speak a bit about that. We are very well developed there.

**Dr. Jamie Wiebe (Director, Player Health, British Columbia Lottery Corporation):** Good afternoon and thank you for your question.

At BCLC, we call it player health. We distinguish that from responsible gambling. We put a lot of effort into making sure that players get the information and support at the right time and for the right people, acknowledging that not all players are the same. There's a continuum of risk from none to low to high. We have services and initiatives associated with where people are.

To start out, we want everyone to have basic gambling literacy. It's like the manual when you buy a car. How does this thing operate? Know the risks. What are the odds of winning? Know that there are resources available.

It's easy to get caught up in gambling. Some people find themselves getting a little bit more involved. That's when we get into nudges—tools online and for our slots. There are services with the GameSense advisers to help people increase their self-awareness and stay within time and money limits that are appropriate for them.

At the far end of the continuum, unfortunately, we have some people for whom it's not about information anymore. It's about taking a break. That's when we have the voluntary self-exclusion. They can take short breaks. We work very closely with the provincial government to link our customers to the wide range of services, including free counselling and helpline services.

It's like a holistic public health approach to our players.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Is there a willingness among provinces to share best practices for this? In Ontario, where I'm from, I'd think there would be an interest to do that among the provinces. I think it gives us a capability to actually be more robust than other countries, because we'll have different regions that can speak to different types of situations.

**Dr. Jamie Wiebe:** That is such an excellent question.

I'm the chair of the Canadian Responsible Gambling Association. We have representatives of player health and responsible gambling from all the jurisdictions. We just commissioned a global review of sports betting. We want to know what the world knows. What are people doing about reducing risk, promoting support and promoting those healthy behaviours? Together, as a national group, we're going to use the results of the study to look at practices in our own jurisdictions.

Canada truly is a leader in taking care of our players and putting the well-being of players first. It's part of the player experience.

Thank you for that question.

• (1250)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Yes, I've had a chance to be on some international panels related to this. There have been nothing but good remarks about our lottery corporations from other jurisdictions around the world. It's nice to get that compliment coming when you're carrying the flag and other professionals note that.

I only have one minute. I'm going to conclude by thanking the witnesses.

I'll also note that the provinces get a chance to roll this out depending upon where they're at and where they think the market is. On top of that, they have control over that to bring it back if there is an issue or a problem. It could be very much a modest step to start or it could be more robust like in British Columbia, Ontario or Quebec. Again, it's about the provinces having control versus Ottawa telling them what can or can't be done.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Masse.

As I indicated earlier, we would need 10 minutes, as Mr. Fortin requested at our last meeting, to discuss his motions and some housekeeping items, so at this time I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for your very compelling testimonies today, for being here and for answering our questions. If there are further clarifications that you'd like to provide, please send them to our clerk in writing. We'd be happy to receive them.

Thank you again. You are now welcome to log off the meeting if you so desire.

Very quickly to members, we'll get to a couple of housekeeping items before we go to Monsieur Fortin's three motions.

First, you've all been emailed our budget for the study of Bill C-218 in the amount of \$2,650. Can I have the consent of the committee to pass this budget? A thumbs-up would be great.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, gentlemen and ladies. I appreciate that.

As per the committee's request for some extra witnesses, I just want to give you an update as to which ones we've invited and the responses.

Monsieur Fortin, you asked us to invite Loto-Québec. Unfortunately, they declined the offer to appear.

Mr. Masse and Mr. Moore asked us to invite the Canadian Football League. They have declined to appear but will be providing written submissions.

You saw some of our witnesses today. The Horsemen's Benevolent Association was from the list of requests to appear. The National Hockey League has been invited, and I understand they will be attending. Racetracks of Canada was also from the list of requests to appear, and we heard from them today as well as from Club Jockey du Québec.

From the list of requests to appear, the Canadian Soccer League has also been invited and so has Sandy Hawley.

If any members have anything else to add, please get in touch with me and our clerk, and then we'll go accordingly.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):** I have a point of clarification, Madam Chair.

You mentioned the CFL. I think we invited both the CFL commissioner as well as the CFL Players' Association. When they contacted me, they both thought they were testifying, so when you say CFL, do you mean the league, or do you mean the players association?

**The Chair:** No, I meant the Canadian Football League, but perhaps we can revisit that based on what you're advising us. We'll have a conversation with the clerk afterwards and ensure that they're represented here at least. The actual league, the CFL, did advise us that they'll be providing written submissions regardless.

Just so members are aware, at our next meeting on Thursday, we will be having Minister Lametti appear in the first hour, and then the second hour will be officials only. We'll be meeting about the supplementary estimates (C) 2020-21 and the main estimates for 2021-22. Keep that in mind as we go into our next meeting.

We have a break week in between, and then March 23 will be the last meeting on C-218. On the 25th, the first hour will be dedicated to considering the draft report for the coercive conduct study, and then in the second hour, we'll go into clause-by-clause for Bill C-218.

Those are my updates with the agenda.

Mr. Moore, I see your hand is raised.

• (1255)

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

On the minister's appearance on Thursday, I think there was an expectation amongst committee members—certainly it was my expectation—that, because the minister is appearing on two items, he would be here for the full two hours.

As you know, that first hour whips around pretty quickly. We don't get many opportunities to have the minister at committee, so I would ask maybe, through you to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Mr. Virani, if we could see about having the minister here for the full two hours.

**The Chair:** Mr. Virani, if you'd like to comment, you can, or I'll go to our clerk to see what the logistical challenges are.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Thanks to Mr. Moore for the question via you, Madam Chair.

What I can say is that Minister Lametti had intended to be here for one hour, and my understanding was that the second hour was meant to be with respect to the continuation of the deliberations on the coercive control report. I apologize if I have that incorrectly, but it was my understanding that Minister Lametti was available for one hour.

I can make inquiries while we're having this meeting to see whether the second hour may be available, but I know he's put aside one hour at this point with the second hour being allocated for the department officials.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We'll follow up on that.

Mr. Clerk, if you had anything to add on this, you're welcome to do so now.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Marc-Olivier Girard):** I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I cannot say that I heard the last few seconds of what you said, but I have no further update.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Moore, we'll definitely look into it. We'll keep you posted before Thursday as to what is happening.

Now we go into Monsieur Fortin's three motions with respect to language and interpretation in committees and documents.

Monsieur Fortin, I think we've all had the opportunity to look at these motions.

If you'd like to speak to them briefly, then we can go to the clerk to provide us with the logistical issues or challenges, or a breakdown of what each motion would entail.

Go ahead, Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

These are straightforward motions that have already been discussed by the Board of Internal Economy and the whips. I gather that this shouldn't be an issue.

I won't go into them any further. I'll read them. I'll start with the first one, which is quite short.

That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.

We just need to make sure that the documents that we receive are written properly in both official languages.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur Fortin.

Mr. Moore, I see your hand is raised on this.

**Hon. Rob Moore:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to Mr. Fortin for bringing this forward.

On what I would call a friendly amendment, I would like to—

**Mr. Brian Masse:** On a point of order, we've lost sound in this room.

**The Chair:** Hold on, folks, for a second. I'll get in touch with the clerk.

Are you able to hear us, Mr. Masse?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** It's back on now, yes.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Thank you.

Mr. Moore, please go ahead.

• (1300)

**Hon. Rob Moore:** What I was about to say was fairly profound, so I want to make sure each and every person hears it.

My friendly amendment would be that after the words “federal department”, we add a comma and then “members' offices”, so that documents coming from our offices would be included as those that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that, Mr. Moore, but for the sake of keeping things the least confusing as possible, maybe we should go motion by motion.

The first motion is as follows:

That the Clerk inform each witness who is to appear before the Committee that the House Administration support team must conduct technical tests to check the connectivity and the equipment used to ensure the best possible sound quality; and that the Chair advise the Committee, at the start of each meeting, of any witness who did not perform the required technical tests.

Do any members have any issues or anything to add to this motion, or are we able to vote on this motion and get it passed at this time? Then we'll move on to the other two motions.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Mr. Moore, you were suggesting a friendly amendment to motion number two, which if we follow it, would read with the amendment, "That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or a member's office, or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau, be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members."

Do members agree with Mr. Moore's friendly amendment to motion number two?

Yes, Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** I agree, Madam Chair. However, I want to make a comment.

Not long ago, a committee member sent me a motion that had been poorly translated. The French version was quite different from the English version. The clerk may remember this. He took it back and provided a translation that we could work with. I want to say that this is important. Otherwise, we have a skewed understanding of the debates.

That said, I'll support Mr. Moore's proposal.

Thank you, Mr. Moore.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You agree to the amendment.

Does everybody agree to the motion as amended?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we move on to motion number three with Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** I won't be moving the third motion at this time. I've spoken with people in the whip's office. Other committees have also addressed the issue. Perhaps we'll prepare a new motion that will achieve greater consensus.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Are you seeking to withdraw the motion, Mr. Fortin?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** I don't want to withdraw it. I just won't move it at this time. It will stay in the notices.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. That's fair.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur Fortin.

That concludes the time Monsieur Fortin requested, and I really appreciate all of your patience.

I just want to clarify one thing. Madam Findlay, you raised the CFL. It was, in fact, the commissioner we had invited, not the actual league, so thank you for clarifying that.

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay:** If I might, Madam Chair, there are two separate organizations. One is the CFL, which is the league. I understand that the commissioner will give a written brief. The other is the CFLPA. That's the players' association. I did want them to be invited to testify, and my understanding is that they wish to be.

We're hearing from great witnesses here, but we discussed before that it seemed to be overly skewed to horse racing and that we weren't hearing from the sports leagues, so I would very much like to see us hear from the CFLPA.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

Mr. Clerk, if it's possible, can we perhaps add that to our list and send off an invitation to them as soon as possible?

Do members agree with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That concludes all the housekeeping items I had on my list today. Is there anything else that members would like to raise at this time?

All right. In that case, thank you, members, for a wonderful meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.









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