**The Vital Role of Horse People and Equine Businesses**

**in the**

**Ontario Equine Agricultural Economic Impact Study**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The equine industry is a vital part of Ontario’s economy, culture, and rural communities, encompassing racing, equestrian sports, breeding, and related businesses. The Ontario Harness Horse Association (OHHA) and Ontario Equine Education and Employment Program (OEEEP), supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFA), are undertaking an economic impact study to quantify the industry’s value and advocate for its growth. Participation from horse people and equine businesses across all disciplines is crucial for:

* **Comprehensive Data Collection**: Contributions of revenue, employment, and operational costs from all sectors (racing, show jumping, veterinary services, etc.) will reveal the industry’s direct, indirect, and induced economic effects, ensuring a complete picture of its impact.
* **Strengthening Advocacy**: Accurate data will empower OHHA/OEEEP to influence policymakers for tax incentives, facility improvements, and youth programs, ensuring all equine disciplines are represented.
* **Securing Funding**: Detailed data on horses, land use, and tourism (e.g., from events like the Royal Winter Fair) will attract public and private investment for facilities, programs, and business expansion.
* **Supporting Rural Economies**: The study will highlight how equine activities sustain jobs, preserve farmland, and boost local businesses, reinforcing the industry’s role in vibrant rural communities.
* **Ensuring Sustainability**: Participation will help identify challenges (e.g., rising costs, urbanization) and opportunities, guiding strategic initiatives to enhance competitiveness and resilience.

The study’s success depends on broad participation from all equine stakeholders, whose data and insights will shape a compelling narrative for policymakers, investors, and the public. Backed by OMAFA, this collaborative effort is an investment in the industry’s future, ensuring its economic and cultural legacy in Ontario.

**The Vital Role of Horse People and Equine Businesses in the Ontario Harness Horse Association/ Ontario Equine and Education Program Economic Impact Study**

The equine industry is a cornerstone of Ontario’s agricultural landscape, contributing significantly to the province’s economy, culture, and community vitality. With the Ontario Harness Horse Association (OHHA), Ontario Equine Education and Employment Program (OEEEP), undertaking an economic impact study, financially supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFA), the participation of horse people and equine businesses across all disciplines— racing, show jumping, dressage, eventing, breeding, and more—is not just beneficial—it’s essential. This collaborative effort aims to quantify the industry’s value, advocate for its growth, and secure its future. Here’s why every stakeholder in Ontario’s diverse equine community should actively engage in this critical initiative.

**Painting a Complete Picture of Economic Influence**

The equine industry in Ontario spans a broad spectrum of activities, from racing and breeding to equestrian sports, trail riding, and supporting businesses like veterinary services and tack shops. However, without comprehensive data, the true scope of its economic contributions remains underrepresented. By participating in the OHHA/OEEEP economic impact study, horse people and equine businesses provide the raw data—such as revenue, employment numbers, and operational costs—that allow researchers to measure the industry’s direct, indirect, and induced economic effects across all disciplines. This holistic view ensures that every job created, from caretakers and coaches to farriers and feed delivery personnel, and every dollar spent, from hay purchases to competition fees, is accounted for. A robust dataset strengthens the case for the industry’s significance, demonstrating its ripple effect across Ontario’s economy.

**Strengthening Advocacy and Policy Support**

Accurate economic data is a powerful tool for advocacy. The OHHA/OEEEP, backed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, can leverage the study’s findings to influence policymakers and secure resources for the entire equine sector. Whether it’s advocating for tax incentives, improved facilities for all disciplines, or funding for youth programs like Pony Club and 4-H, the study provides the evidence needed to make a compelling argument. Horsepeople and businesses that contribute their insights—whether they’re involved in racing, dressage, recreational riding, or any other equine discipline—ensure their voices are heard, helping to shape policies that protect and promote their livelihoods. Without widespread participation, the study risks underestimating the industry’s value, weakening its ability to compete for attention and support in a crowded agricultural landscape.

**Securing Funding and Investment Opportunities**

The financial backing of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness signals a commitment to understanding and bolstering Ontario’s equine industry. A well-executed economic impact study can unlock further public and private investment, from grants for equine facility upgrades and show grounds to loans for expanding equine businesses of all kinds. However, investors and policymakers need reliable data to justify their decisions. Participation from horse people and businesses provides the granular detail—such as the number of horses supported, land used, or tourism dollars generated by events like the Royal Winter Fair, Queens Plate and local horse shows—that builds confidence in the industry’s economic potential. This, in turn, can lead to enhanced facilities, improved programs across disciplines, and greater visibility for Ontario’s equine community.

**Highlighting the Industry’s Role in Rural Communities**

Ontario’s equine industry, encompassing racing and other disciplines, is deeply rooted in rural areas, where it serves as an economic driver and cultural anchor. The OHHA/OEEEP study offers a chance to quantify this impact, showcasing how equine activities sustain jobs, preserve farmland, and attract visitors—whether through race meets, horse shows, or trail riding tourism. Horsepeople and businesses participating in the study can highlight their contributions to local economies—think of the feed stores, veterinarians, and small retailers that thrive because of their presence. By documenting these connections, the study reinforces the industry’s role in maintaining vibrant rural communities, a narrative that resonates with municipal, provincial and federal officials, and the public.

**Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability**

The equine industry faces challenges, from rising costs to urbanization pressures that threaten agricultural land. An economic impact study provides a roadmap for addressing these issues by identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth across all equine disciplines. Participation ensures that the study reflects the real-world experiences of those on the ground—whether it’s a trainer, a show jumper, or a business supplying saddles. This input can guide strategic planning, helping the OHHA/OEEEP and its partners develop initiatives that enhance competitiveness and resilience. For instance, data showing high participation in equestrian sports could spur investment in training facilities, ensuring the next generation keeps the industry thriving.

**A Collective Responsibility**

The OHHA/OEEEP economic impact study is a collective endeavor, and its success hinges on broad participation from all corners of the equine world. Horsepeople and equine businesses are not just beneficiaries of the findings—they are co-creators of the story it tells. By sharing their data and perspectives, they help build a compelling case for the industry’s value, one that resonates with lawmakers, investors, and the wider community. The financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness amplifies the study’s credibility and reach, but it’s the grassroots involvement—those of you that have dedicated yourselves to the equine industries—that gives it depth and authenticity.

**Conclusion**

Participating in the OHHA/OEEEP economic impact study is more than a task—it’s an investment in the future of Ontario’s equine industry. For horse people and equine businesses across all disciplines, it’s a chance to showcase their economic contributions, advocate for their needs, and secure the support necessary to thrive. With the backing of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, this study has the potential to elevate the industry’s profile and ensure its legacy for years to come. Every stakeholder has a role to play—because when Ontario’s equine community stands together, its impact is undeniable.