

# BUSINESS

BREAKING NEWS AT LEADERPOST.COM

SECTION D TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 2012

FUNDING

## Horse racing industry takes a tumble

WILL CHABUN  
LEADER-POST

The horse racing industry in Saskatchewan is in a state of alarm after the provincial government indicated it's reining in the money it gives the industry.

Glenn LeDrew, president of the Saskatchewan Standardbred Horsemen's Association (SSHA), said the provincial government has indicated it will cut off the \$1.5 million it gives to the industry after this racing season.

There are three tracks in the province: Saskatoon's venerable Marquis Downs, Cornerstone Raceway at Yorkton's exhibition grounds and the new West Meadows, on Pinkie Road on Regina's western edge, which drew what LeDrew said was upwards of 700 fans to its four Sunday race days last autumn.

But what happens after this season "is a really good question," LeDrew said in a telephone interview Monday.

He said the SSHA will meet with all stakeholders within the next month to talk about keeping the industry alive after the money stops flowing.

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JANE GRAINER

"We really hope so," he said, adding that the loss of this money, "is a pretty big hit to our industry."

"We're just not certain how everything is going to shake out yet."

Jane Grainer, president of shareholder-owned West Meadows, wrote Monday that, "I guess you could say the government has blindsided the horse racing industry as a whole."

"Horse racing has been around for over 100 years in Saskatchewan. Now, the Sask. Party government wants to take away our parimutuel tax, which comes from the wagering on horse racing.

"The larger portion (\$857,000) of the funding doesn't come from anyone's pocket unless they wager on horse racing. It is a tax the government has on the wagering of horse racing and, for as long as I remember, it has been given back to the horse-racing industry.

"The grant portion (\$600,000) pays for many people to be employed in the industry, plus the kickback to the province from horse racing is even greater."

See RACING, D4



TROY FLEECE/Leader-Post

A fish eye lens captures crews at work on Centre Square Place on the 2300 block of Broad Street on Monday. According to the developer and designer of Centre Square Place, it will be a \$31-million, 10-storey building on the southwest corner of Broad St. and 15th Ave.

BUILDING PERMITS

## Construction activity up 16% in February

LEADER-POST STAFF

Saskatchewan saw a nearly 16-per-cent, year-over-year increase in the value of its building permits in February, compared with a national average increase of 11.7 per cent over the same period, Statistics Canada said in a recent report.

The value of building permits in the province was \$201.4 million, up 15.9 per

cent from \$173.7 million in February 2011, but down 2.6 per cent from \$206.8 million in January, StatsCan said.

Most of the increase was due to residential construction, which increased 29.2 per cent year over year to \$129.8 million from \$100.4 million in February 2011. Non-residential construction was down 2.3 per cent to \$71.6 million during the same period.

On a month-to-month

basis, however, both residential and non-residential building permits in February were down from January in Saskatchewan by 2.1 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively.

By contrast, the value of building permits issued across Canada rose more than expected in February, thanks to the non-residential sector.

Statistics Canada said building permits were up

7.5 per cent, on a seasonally adjusted basis, to \$6.5 billion. That followed a decline of 11.4 per cent in January, revised from an initially reported decline of 12.3 per cent.

Economists polled by Bloomberg expected the figures would show a two-per-cent gain in building permit values for February.

Non-residential permits soared 36.2 per cent in February to a value of \$2.5 billion.

That included a 151.1-per-cent rise in permits for industrial buildings, 64.8-per-cent again in institutional permits and 3.4-per-cent rise in commercial permits.

Residential permits were down 5.3 per cent to \$3.9 billion. There was a decline of 6.7 per cent in permits to build single-family homes, and drop of 3.3 per cent in multi-unit housing.

With files from Postmedia News

## Minister, ex-chair spar over Tourism Saskatchewan

WILL CHABUN  
LEADER-POST

Yorkton businessman Dick DeRyk, who helped set up Tourism Saskatchewan, said recently announced changes to it are the result of "political vindictiveness" and were poorly thought out.

DeRyk, who in 1995 and '96 chaired the government-industry committee that negotiated the Tourism Saskatchewan's creation, said he believes the recent government decision to restructure it as a provincial Crown corporation was made not by Tourism Minister Bill Hutchinson, but by the "old boys" elsewhere in the Saskatchewan Party.

Hutchinson was given the job of breaking the news to Tourism Saskatchewan's CEO, Lynda Haverstock, and its chair, Yorkton's Randy Goulden, said DeRyk, who

added Monday he's not keen on the change, but recognizes the government "has the power to do what they want to do."

DeRyk, who was Tourism Saskatchewan's first chair and its interim CEO early in its existence, wondered aloud if there was a connection between the restructuring and Haverstock's history as the leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal party in the 1990s, plus Goulden's role as an NDP candidate in 2007. Goulden, incidentally, re-emerged Monday as the chair of a group called "Friends of Tourism" — which has a website, Facebook site and PR firm — and wants the tourism industry to have input into the restructuring.

Firing back, Hutchinson said there was "absolutely not" any political motivation and added the change was about "best practices" and helping tourism reach

its potential.

He said the government "looked everywhere in the country" for another stand-alone tourism agency "and

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DICK DERYK

couldn't find another example".

Having government-funded Tourism Saskatchewan lobby the government was an unusual situation, said Hutchinson, who added the tourism industry could reinvent TISASK, the tourism industry-funded association

that existed pre-Tourism Saskatchewan, to represent it.

DeRyk contrasted the long consultation between the then-NDP government and the tourism industry in 1995-96 that led to the creation of Tourism Saskatchewan with the surprise announcement that Tourism Saskatchewan would be absorbed by the government after 15 years' existence as a stand-alone agency with its own board and memberships.

He also noted that two government representatives sat on the board of Tourism Saskatchewan during a recent reorganization designed to make it more responsive, yet failed to tell it the province was rethinking its approach.

That's led him to conclude the restructuring announcement was "a quick decision and not well thought out — and that it smacks of pettiness and vindictiveness".

DeRyk, who no longer

has any official connection to Tourism Saskatchewan, but still "knows a lot of people in the industry", was also dismissive of provincial Finance Minister's Ken Krawetz's March 23 claim the change will let the government showcase provincial parks.

DeRyk said this issue, if it existed, would have been "infinitely resolvable", adding that the virtue of a membership-based approach was a kind of cohesiveness among tourism businesses that compete ferociously, "but also recognize that they need to pull together because we're a small market in a huge world". And the idea Tourism Saskatchewan's elected, unpaid board of directors will be replaced by a paid board appointed by the provincial government "doesn't give anybody a warm and fuzzy feeling."

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