

# *BCTOBA NEWSLETTER*

By Mike Heads

With the racing season fast approaching, I would like to update everyone on some of the things that have gone on in the past few months with BCTOBA.

We concluded 2010 by preparing the business plan and budget for the thoroughbred owner's allocation from the provincial government. The final total available number for purses ended up at \$10.175 million, a total derived from projected revenues of racing handle and slots at both Fraser Downs and Hastings. The thoroughbred dates were set at 71 racing days comprised of 539 overnight races racing for \$7.5 million and 41 stakes events totaling \$2.575 million. The balance of the allocation (\$100,000) went to the B.C. Interior Racing Association.

January 2011 presented more challenges as we were informed that TBC (the company in charge of all B.C. off-track betting sites) had no working capital. The reason being is that they were never initially seeded with money to operate so they are forced to operate by paying their bills using wagering handle revenues thus don't pay the horsemen's share of revenues to the purse pool for at least 45 days after the day they take in the money. For example, revenues for the horsemen's purse account earned on May 1<sup>st</sup> aren't paid to the account by TBC until June 15<sup>th</sup>. So in the summer, when we run all the bigger purse races, with TBC handling over 50% of the wagering, the purse account will be in a negative position. Great Canadian Gaming Corporation has made a presentation to the Financial Working Group to obtain an industry float that would allow the thoroughbreds to come up with approximately \$500,000 for the purse account to cover the likelihood of the account being overdrawn in August. We do not believe we should contribute to this float and we have a strong representative in the Financial Working Group dealing with this issue but it does continue to be a problem.

In March 2011, the B.C. Interior Horse Racing Association came to BCTOBA for assistance. They asked for help to get volunteers to run their opening race day on April 9<sup>th</sup> in Kamloops. Through the help of BCTOBA and GCGC / Hastings, in particular Paul Ryneveld and Joe Gray, we were able to get everything in place except enough horses to make the day go. Unfortunately it was just too early for the interior horsemen to get ready. The support from the Hastings horsemen was excellent but due to a lack of entries the day was called off. Their first racing date now moves to Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup> in Princeton. All parties will be on side again to aid the interior horsemen for that afternoon. For the supporters of the B.C. Interior racing, BCTOBA has made a donation form available at the Horsemen's Bookkeeper's office for those who wish to donate 0.5% (half of one percent) of all

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place earnings in 2011 to aid the purses for the B.C. Interior Horse Racing Association.

Just recently BCTOBA was asked by Great Canadian Gaming Corp. to take over the Horsemens Bookkeeper and the functions connected with the Horsemens Purse Account. They would like the owner's to run their own purse account as is done in many other racing jurisdictions. BCTOBA has agreed and has retained the services of popular bookkeeper Merrilee Elliott. We are now finalizing the paperwork in taking over this account.

BCTOBA is pleased to be affiliated with the thoroughbred adoption agency New Stride. We have had meetings with their board and have discussed budgeting as well as ways to create funds for this worthy cause. We were able to set up a donation form for horse owner's to voluntarily support New Stride. All owner's have the option of donating 0.5% of all 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place earnings in 2011. These forms can be filled out and submitted to the Horsemens Bookkeeper.

BCTOBA has been present at meetings with the BC Lottery Corp. viewing their advertising campaign for this thoroughbred season. BCLC was given an advertising budget of \$800,000 in the 2011 racing allocation. All parties that attended were very impressed with the ideas and strategies BCLC has set forth, we'll see some of their work very soon.

BCTOBA president, Ole Nielsen, is heading to Victoria for meetings with Horse Racing Industry Management Committee chair, Derek Sturko and hopefully the newly appointed solicitor general, Shirley Bond who is now in charge of gaming.

BCTOBA has served and is currently serving on many industry committees dealing with many racetrack issues such as stakes scheduling, racing dates, rule changes, and day-to-day racetrack issues related to horsemen.

This is an extremely challenging year and we need all horsemen to promote our exciting sport. We are our greatest ambassadors and it is imperative that we make this season as entertaining as possible. These projected purses for 2011 are not guaranteed so we must create full fields for wagering in order to keep these purses as attractive as they are. Good luck to all horsemen and may you all have a safe and prosperous 2011 racing season.