

From the standpoint of the provinces, provincial interests are protected by the requirement that each theatre location be licensed by the provincial Lieutenant Governor before the federal Government will issue a teletheatre parimutuel betting licence. This is in recognition of the provincial responsibilities for horseracing. Furthermore, no association will be allowed to conduct theatre betting within its federally assigned market area unless it has reached an agreement with the horsemen to share the costs and revenues of theatre betting. As well, the two parties must agree on the scheduling of races at betting theatres.

More particularly for the future, I want to assure Hon. Members that the teletheatre concept will not evolve into on-street betting shops. Such establishments are not desired by either the Government or the industry. Rather, teletheatres will be required to have such minimum facilities as seating, food and beverage concessions, restraint in betting activity and, of course, live video coverage of races. In other words, teletheatres will be extensions of race tracks rather than replacements for them, and I think that is important to bear in mind.

The horseracing industry is labour intensive. It employs many skilled and unskilled workers, many of them in rural areas. As I said earlier, there is a commitment to this industry by many people and a love for the industry on the part of those who are involved in it. To them, it is more than simply a job. These jobs would be extremely difficult to replace if ever lost. As I said earlier, we are not only providing the potential for the creation of new jobs but we are in fact ensuring the preservation of existing jobs. We believe that the creation of teletheatres will protect these existing jobs as well as create new employment within the industry.

For these reasons, I would hope that we can garner the support and co-operation of all Hon. Members, particularly Hon. Members opposite, to give favourable and expeditious consideration to the legislation before us. I believe the House should act on the opportunity to assist a very important sector of the Canadian economy, an opportunity which is being provided at no expense to the public.

Criminal Code

As I said earlier, we are not only preserving an industry but indeed promoting it. We are helping it along and providing the assurance that jobs will be maintained and created. As well, in strengthening this industry, we are in fact preserving a bit of Canadian culture, something that is quite fundamental to Canadian life. I would hope that I can call upon the goodwill and support of all Hon. Members in moving this legislation forward.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join in this afternoon's debate on Bill C-7 which provides for amendments to the Criminal Code with regard to pari-mutuel betting. At the outset, I suggest to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Mazankowski) that since the agriculture committee is to be organized later this afternoon or this evening, we might by unanimous consent consider referring the Bill to the agriculture committee rather than to a legislative committee in the hope that it might more expeditiously handle the Bill.

Bill C-7 does two things. It amends Section 204(2) of the Criminal Code and Section 204(8) of the Criminal Code and provides that pari-mutuel bets can be placed in a teletheatre as well as by telephone, as is allowed at the present time. That is the amendment to Section 204(2).

The amendment to Section 204(8) provides for the Governor in Council and the Lieutenant Governor to authorize the making of regulations by the Minister of Agriculture at the federal level and provides for the Lieutenant Governor in Council and such other persons or authority in the province as may be specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to issue licenses for the associations. At the technical level, those are the two amendments provided for by Bill C-7.

The impact of this legislation on the racing industry will go very far. The impact will be very important, particularly for the remote areas of Canada which do not have the population base to successfully operate race tracks on a long-term basis.

I am thinking particularly of the situation with Sudbury Downs in northern Ontario. The track has been closed, though I understand arrangements have now been made to have a racing season this fall and to have a simulcast racing operation this summer. That situation is typical of the difficulties that are faced in a number of areas of Canada, areas that simply do not have a large enough population base to support a race track.