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**Hong Kong Equestrian Federation (HKEF)'s Submission to
Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on
Hong Kong Jockey Club's Proposals**

The HKEF is dedicated to the furtherance of equestrian sports and welfare in Hong Kong. Since our establishment in 1973 we have been the only official body in Hong Kong representing equestrian sports at both national and international levels.

As a member of the Federation Equestrian International we are responsible for holding international equestrian competitions in Hong Kong. Every year, the HKEF in conjunction with the HKJC, is pleased to host a series of international competitions.

Prominently, the HKEF co-operates closely with the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) on all matters related to equestrian sports including the organization of regular competitions in jumping, dressage, and eventing for local competitions. Our successful co-operation in staging of the Olympic equestrian events in Hong Kong last year is an outstanding example and goes a long way to establish Hong Kong as the world's equestrian capital.

Further underlining its commitment to promote and develop equestrian sports in Hong Kong, the HKJC announced in last December to provide an addition of HK\$50 million over the next four years to assist senior riders of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Equestrian Team with their training and preparation for major international competitions with the preliminary aim of Asian Games, Olympic Games and China Games and also to establish one Junior Equestrian Team with five riders each year. These junior teams receive special training and financial support to enhance their skills in the sport. These activities help sustain the Olympic spirit and legacy in Hong Kong and ensure that equestrian sport continues to flourish in the city.

The HKJC recently resumed its proposals on betting duty reforms, including five extra race meetings and a number of additional simulcasts. The HKEF wishes to express its support for the proposals for the following reasons.

HKJC Support for Local Equestrian Industry in Various Aspects:

Infrastructure:

There are more than 2,000 people who are riding regularly in Hong Kong.

Following the Olympic equestrian events held last year, the waiting list in the three public riding schools has increased to 3,000 from 2,000 before the Games. Accordingly, the potential riders in Hong Kong could have increased to 5,000. Due to insufficient facilities and infrastructure for equestrian sport in Hong Kong, we have already lost many potential riders as some have already sought for alternatives by going across the border for riding. In other words, not only equestrian sport will not be able to develop further but will also affect the image of Hong Kong as an Equine Capital.

Employment:

At this stage more than 200 people are working fulltime in the equestrian sector. Assuming the number of riders could be doubled the number of jobs will also increase significantly.

Education:

Teachers and schools realize more and more the educational aspect of horses and the equestrian sport. The handling and riding of horses and the general contact to animals supports children in their development to learn to take over responsibility, to gain self confidence, social behaviour, improve concentration and self discipline.

So far more than 16,000 people visited one Public Riding School in Tuen Mun during one Year and this number already reaches the Riding Schools capacity limit for School visits.

Equestrian sport:

Without the generous support of the HKJC, Hong Kong will not have any chance of developing its equestrian sport. Other than the properties which are mainly provided by the Government, just about every piece of infrastructure was put in by the HKJC and the most important assets of these schools are of course all retired race horses donated by the HKJC.

More importantly, these activities show how HKJC fulfils its unique not-for-profit mode of operation as a role model for all racing jurisdictions in the world. In fact, its leading role and efforts in promoting equestrian and racing as a sport have been widely commended and recognized by all of its counterparts, both locally and worldwide.

Horseracing as sport:

Horseracing is an important form of sport in its own right.

More than 20 jockeys are members of HKEF and therefore part of our Equestrian community in Hong Kong. Five extra race meetings a year and additional simulcasts represent minimal changes to current arrangements but give the jockeys and all interested people and fans the possibility to live this sport. The equestrian community supports the jockeys and racing as a sport.

With the Olympic legacy, extra race days will further enhance Hong Kong's position as the Equine Capital.

The HKJC has enjoyed a reputation as an important member of the international racing and equestrian fraternity upholding world-class racing, racing integrity, responsible gambling policies and equestrian sport in every professional way it can.

The Government therefore should support any initiative that aims to enhance the HKJC's viability.

Conclusion:

In addition, the HKEF thinks that it is crucial for the Government to try its utmost to strengthen Hong Kong's competitiveness and secure its position as Asia's World City and its tourism industry. To achieve the goal, the participation of the HKJC is significant as well as inevitable.

Finally, we believe the livelihood of racing-related professionals would be adversely affected if the Government takes a standstill position in racing and betting policies when severe competition in the region continues to intensify.

Without supporting the racing industry Hong Kong will not only lose the possibility of additional taxes, but also risks the right decisions regarding a flourishing racing industry and therefore we will lose the guarantee of sustainable equestrian sport in Hong Kong.

Without Equestrian Sport in Hong Kong the Government loses not only every single HK\$ invested in the Olympic Games, but more important it is not following the obligation of using the Olympic Games as a legacy and investment for the region and Hong Kong's image and future as an equine capital.

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