

Members Of The Panel-

My name is Luc Ouellette, and I am a harness racing driver, owner, breeder, and former trainer. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the use of the whip in our industry.

My grandfather, Gédéon Lachance has two sons, Gilles and Michel in the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame and three other sons that drove horses for a living, and now I am part of the next generation of drivers from that family, and have had a successful career myself with almost 8,000 wins and over \$120 million in earnings.

From the time I was four-years old, my grandfather would take me out driving horses, and as I got older, he taught me how to turn the horse and go a mile with them. One day, he told me to go cut a branch off a tree and showed me how putting the branch on the horses' tail would make it go faster. He taught me with that branch that the correct and proper use of the whip is a fundamental part of being a driver. I have over 43,000 starts as a driver, and only a few whipping violations, all of which were minor.

We horsemen know what is best for our equine athletes, they are our livelihood and we owe them so much. Groups who criticize horse racing, while thinking they mean well, do not know enough about horses to dictate to us how to operate in our industry. If it were up to some people who look in at horse racing from a distance, horses would be kept inside all day with two or three blankets on them instead of being outside where they can play and be happy, and do what horses are supposed to do.

In simple terms, horses are not humans. They recognize us by our scent, not the way we look, and I can tell you that when I come off the track, after having driven a horse through the stretch, that they do not hate me or resent me. If I choose to, I can go up to that horse in the paddock after a race, and they will not be afraid. Furthermore, I had horses I drove in the past like Red Bow Tie, Armbro Proposal, and Turnpike Token at my farm after their careers were over, and they knew me by my smell and that I drove them, and they were not afraid of me.

Drivers on the Woodbine Entertainment Group circuit, where I race, know that when a horse is not going forward, they should put the whip away and stop driving on them. If there is an infraction, then the three judges should handle it within the current framework of the rules, and if they need to apply a penalty or penalties, so be it. In my opinion, it would be against our best interests to limit drivers further as to what we can do during a race.

In closing, I drove in the Elitlopp in Sweden this year where they do not allow you to take both lines in one hand and hit the horse, and I felt that it affected my chances of winning an elimination of that race and getting second money in the final. In my experience, horses do go forward when you hit them, and there are world champions in harness racing's past that would not have turned out the way they did without a driver being able to correctly and effectively use the whip on them. Thank you.