

Chad Bohanan
 Investigator, Northern Region
 Special Provincial Constable -Enforcement Division-
 Gaming Policy & Enforcement Branch
 by email to: chad.bohanan@gov.bc.ca

RE: Unlicensed gaming by Michael Lares / Flying “L” Ranch

Hello Mr. Bohanan,

I wanted to write you and express my thanks for taking an interest in this matter.

I assume it was your initial action contacting Mr. Lares that resulted in his posting an Instagram story video (the “**clarification**”) suggesting he just became aware a gaming license is required to operate raffles and thus is cancelling the current raffle (image #1 below).

Mr. Lares’ clarification raises a number of concerns which, if I may be so bold, I would like to draw your attention to. I have a few recommendations and a question. Please do excuse me if any recommendations are outside the jurisdiction or authority of the GPEB.

Multiple unlicensed raffles with least 3 held in 2024

Mr. Lares solicited participation in at least three unlicensed raffles in 2024. In anticipation of a chance to win the stated prizes of a free trip to the Flying “L” Ranch, participants made payments for raffle tickets. Two of those unlicensed raffles are over. With cessation of the August 2024 unlicensed raffle it is no longer possible for those who purchased tickets for it to win anything at all.

I understand from the grapevine Mr. Lares was fully aware of raffles are required to be licensed, however at this time I cannot provide verification of that.

It is practically impossible for any raffle participant to discover the raffle has been cancelled and that refunds may be available on submission of an opt-in request.

The clarification notifies ticket payees they may opt-in for the possibility of a full refund provided they contact Mr. Lares via Instagram Direct Message (DM)¹, otherwise Mr. Lares will keep the raffle ticket payments. It is unclear whether the refund opt-in is applicable to payees of all three 2024 unlicensed raffles or restricted to the most recent and just cancelled one.

The clarification has limited visibility and availability. It is in the form of an Instagram story video and thus vanishes after 24 hours, as it now has having been posted around 2pm ET on August 8, 2024. The clarification notice is also in a virtually impossible to find Instagram video reel. I will explain further.

Landing on Mr. Lares Instagram page the clarification cannot be found. In order to find the clarification within the 24-hours of its availability the Instagram user must know to take specific actions, first clicking on the image of Mr. Lares to access his current video stories (image #2 below) and then sitting/sifting through the stories

1 In order to view Flying “L” Ranch / Michael Lares Instagram postings or to Direct Message (DM) Mr. Lares the Instagram user must NOT have been “blocked” by Mr. Lares.

until the clarification appears. It is not reasonable to expect payees would know to do this, let alone within the limited time of its availability.

In the top left corner of the video story clarification the text *“Watch full reel”* is a link which, if selected, opens the original August 2024 video reel announcing Flying *“L”* Ranch is conducting another raffle due to the success of the immediately previous one (URL [“https://www.instagram.com/reels/C-Bt8NGyS5F/”](https://www.instagram.com/reels/C-Bt8NGyS5F/)).

This original video reel has been slightly modified, adding the single line of text saying *“UPDATE: We’ve just become aware that we require a gaming lic.. more”* which are the first few words of the clarification (image #3 below). The user must take the specific action of clicking on the word *“more”* to reveal the additional text of the clarification and use the scroll bar to view all of it (image #4 below). I have preserved a video of this if needed.

The clarification video story has now vanished and therefore the *“Watch full reel”* hint to the video reel is no longer available. Although the video reel will remain until Mr. Lares deletes it, it is virtually impossible to find. The Instagram user must know to select *“Reels”* from Mr. Lares instagram landing page (image #5 below) and then from the presented grid of images know which one to select. There is no indication of any sort to guide the user to the *“full reel”* leaving the user to view any number of video reels in order to perhaps stumble upon this one (image #6 below). With the addition of more video reels older reels, such as this one, get pushed further down the grid of images further rendering it a matter of pure chance to discover.

Instagram posts may be “pinned” to remain prominent.

Instagram provides the ability to *“pin”* a posting so that it remains in a prominent position at the top of the account holder’s landing page. For example, you noticed the legal letter Mr. Lares posted in February 2024 as it sits prominently as the first image in the grid on his landing page because it is *“pinned”*. It is difficult to see the image of the push-pin in the upper right corner of the pinned item because the pin is white on a white background, but is there in the top right corner (image #7 below).

Recommendation #1:

To facilitate visitors to Mr. Lares Flying *“L”* Ranch Instagram page to become aware of the availability of refund, particularly those who purchased tickets for the unlicensed raffles, I urge GPEB to require Mr Lares to *“pin”* a clarification such that will sit in a prominent position at the top of the grid on the Flying *“L”* Ranch / Michael Lares Instagram landing page (subject to Recommendation #2 below).

Refunds should be sent by default unless payee elects to opt-out:

The default remedy offered in Mr. Lares’ clarification is that he will pocket raffle ticket payments re-categorized as a donations (*“... you’re welcome to leave your donations ...”*) unless a payee takes the proscribed action to opt-in and apply for a refund (*“Or if you would like, you may receive a full refund of your cost to enter the raffle. Simply DM me for that verification and process.”*).

In other words, to received a refund a payee is required to take action to opt-in by request to Mr. Lares which will be subject to an undefined *“verification and process”* under Mr. Lares’ sole control. There are no accountability measures in place to assure refunds will be received.

Any reasonable person would perceive this as inherently unfair to payees and skewed towards Mr. Lares retaining raffle ticket payments by placing the onus on the payee to opt-in action to request a refund with no

guarantee of the result. Add to that unfairness the how virtually impossible it is for payees to even be aware that refunds may be had.

It would be more fair and equitable for the default remedy to be Mr. Lares issuing a full refund unless the payee elects to inform Mr. Lares that they wish to opt-out of receiving a refund.

Recommendation #2:

I urge GPEB to direct Mr. Lares to revise the clarification (pinned to the top of his Instagram landing page) to clearly indicate all unlicensed raffle ticket payees will receive a full refund unless they provide written notice to Mr. Lares they wish to opt-out of receiving a refund and give permission for their ticket payments to re-categorized as a donation.

A reasonable cut-off date for opt-out notices to be received by Mr. Lares should be set, perhaps 2 weeks from the date a revised clarification posting is “pinned” and together with sending email notifications as per Recommendations #3.

Refund notification should be sent to payees by email:

Restricting notification to Mr. Lares’ Instagram platform is not sufficient to alert more than a very small number of payees that the recent raffle has been cancelled and refunds may be had. Sending a notification by email to all payees would be 100% effective and would not require any action on the part of payees unless they wished to opt-out of receiving a refund.

Mr. Lares has readily available the necessary contact information for every payee to notify them by email along with knowing the amounts each paid for tickets. The payee’s contact information is part of the electronic payment process. By way of confirming Mr. Lares has easy access to every payees’ contact information, Mr. Lares posted videos of the July 1, 2024 unlicensed raffle draw at the Williams Lake Stampede, making note of the fact that the names of payees are obtained from their electronic payments and transferred by hand to post-it notes.

Although Mr. Lares has the information necessary to email a clarification/refund notice to all payees, to my knowledge he has not done so.

Recommendation #3:

I urge GPEB to require Mr Lares to email every payee with notice that full refunds will be sent electronically to every payee, subject only to the written opt-out notification by the payee.

Mr. Lares should not be allowed to reap financial benefit from having held unlicensed raffles and refunds should be applicable to all three unlicensed raffles held in 2024:

GPEB has been provided with documentation of three unlicensed raffles orchestrated by Mr. Lares in 2024. It would be appropriate for the remedy of a refund to be applicable to those who purchased tickets for any of these unlicensed raffles.

Recommendation #4:

I urge GPEB to direct Mr. Lares to clearly state in the rephrased clarification as per Recommendation #2 above that by default a full refund for tickets purchased for any of the three 2024 unlicensed raffles will be provided, subject only to the written opt-out notification by the payee.

Payment pages for unlicensed raffle tickets remain available on-line:

In spite of the August 2024 raffle being cancelled the PayPal raffle ticket payment page remains available at https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=3N8Q8TVK6VU2N as is at least one previous raffle ticket payment page from the immediately preceding unlicensed raffle at https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=LGEW63FZUHQQ6.

Recommendation #5:

I urge GPEB to direct Mr. Lares to remove all PayPal and other donation solicitation and payment pages within which there is mention of purchasing tickets for these unlicensed raffle.

About Flying "L" Ranch Limited:

Mr. Lares states Flying "L" Ranch is owned by the Lares Family (image #8 below). If GPEB is not already aware, this is not true.

Flying "L" Ranch Limited is a for-profit company incorporated in BC (Incorporation Number BC1211100 &, Business Number 789488533). There are two directors of which Mr. Lares is but one, with Mr. Peter van der Heyden being the other (Notice of Articles available on requested).

Although I cannot provide verification, from the grapevine I understand Mr. Van der Heyden believes Mr. Lares refuses to fulfill his corporate obligations and responsibilities, as required by BC Business Corporations Act, and has effectively "gone rogue". Further, that Mr. Van der Heyden is concerned that he is unable to prevent or stop Mr. Lares from actions that may expose Mr. Van der Heyden himself, as well as the company, to liabilities, such as conducting unlicensed raffles, and for soliciting donations under the false premise that Flying "L" Ranch is a "horse sanctuary focused on helping local wildies [wild horses] in need" when in reality it is a horse breeding operation.

Recommendation #6:

I urge GPEB to contact Mr. Van der Heyden regarding any concerns GPEB has in respect to the activities of Mr. Lares / Flying "L" Ranch.

Recommendation #7:

I urge GPEB to include Mr. Van der Heyden in all communications regarding Flying "L" Ranch, including past communications to Mr. Lares, and including any communications from Mr. Lares which have not been copied to Mr. Van der Heyden.

Reporting and accountability:

The publication "GPEB Licensed Charitable Gaming Rules (February 27, 2023)" describes a number of measures to assure a gaming licensee operates responsibly, is financially accountable, and provides various compliance and accountability reports. I assume it follows that GPEB has the authority to confirm the veracity of anything a licensee reports, inclusive of completeness of reports and verification of finances.

Unlicensed gaming operations, such as the raffles operated by Mr. Lares /Flying "L" Ranch, should not be able to escape scrutiny simply because of being conducted without license, and thus reap financial benefits for having done so. Indeed a raffle discovered to having been held "under the radar" without license ought to trigger investigations.

Question #1:

Will GPEB be conducting investigations into the finances the 3 raffles operated by Mr. Lares / Flying "L" Ranch in 2024?

This is the end of my submission with my apologies for its length.

I want to thank you for taking the time to review this and hopefully you will be able to let me know your response to the recommendations and to the question.

Best regards,

s. 22

References and images follow

References and Images

Full text of clarification which, for some reason, includes the original announcement [emphasis added];

Oh oh guys, please ready [sic] below! ❤️

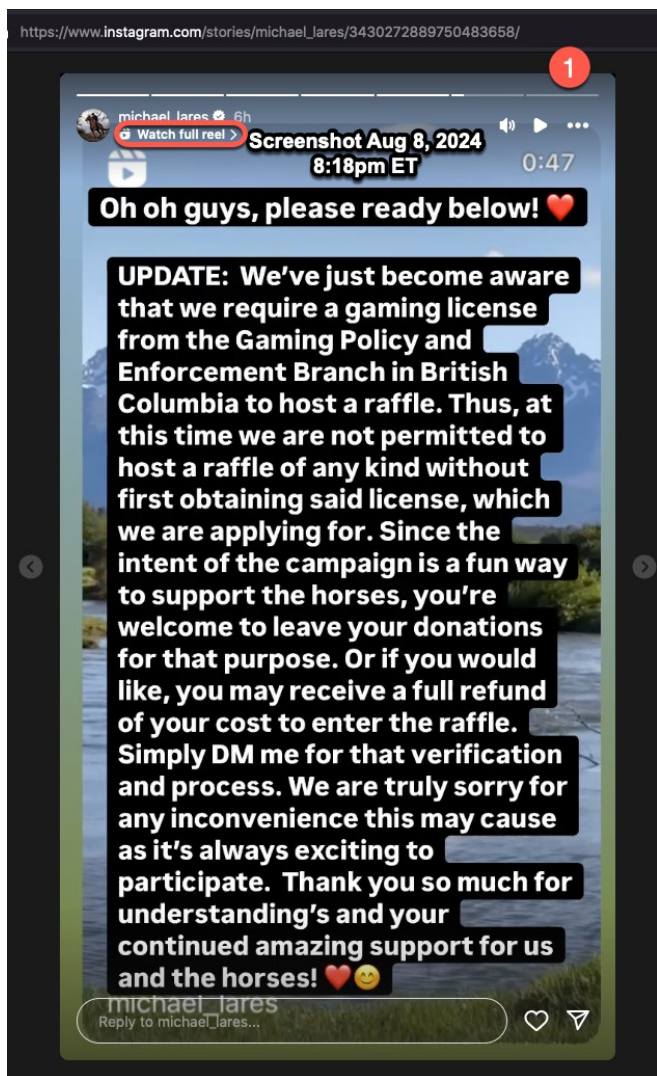
UPDATE: We've just become aware that we require a gaming license from the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch in British Columbia to host a raffle. Thus, at this time we are not permitted to host a raffle of any kind without first obtaining said license, which we are applying for. Since the intent of the campaign is a fun way to support the horses, **you're welcome to leave your donations** for that purpose. Or if you would like, **you may receive a full refund of your cost to enter the raffle.** **Simply DM me for that verification and process.** We are truly sorry for any inconvenience this may cause as it's always exciting to participate. Thank you so much for understanding's and your continued amazing support for us and the horses! ❤️😊

Original Post: Enter for your chance to win an all expenses paid trip for two at the ranch. Full lodging, meals and rides are covered and travel for one from anywhere in the world.

Entry is simple and tickets are \$25 each with no limits on purchase. Your winning ticket can also be assigned to someone of your choice!

Your entry will be registered with your ticket purchase via your information given at check out.

Good luck to everyone entering and we look forward to having you out!





2

michael_lares



Follow

2,306 posts

175K followers

Michael Lares-Flying "L" Ranch

Public figure

Living in peace off-grid with my beautiful horses in the majestic Canadian Rockies

exclusive.flyinglranh.ca + 1

https://www.instagram.com/reels/C-Bt8NGyS5F/



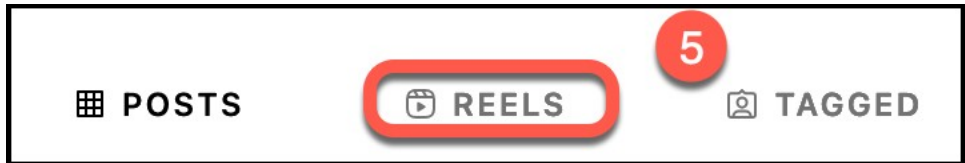
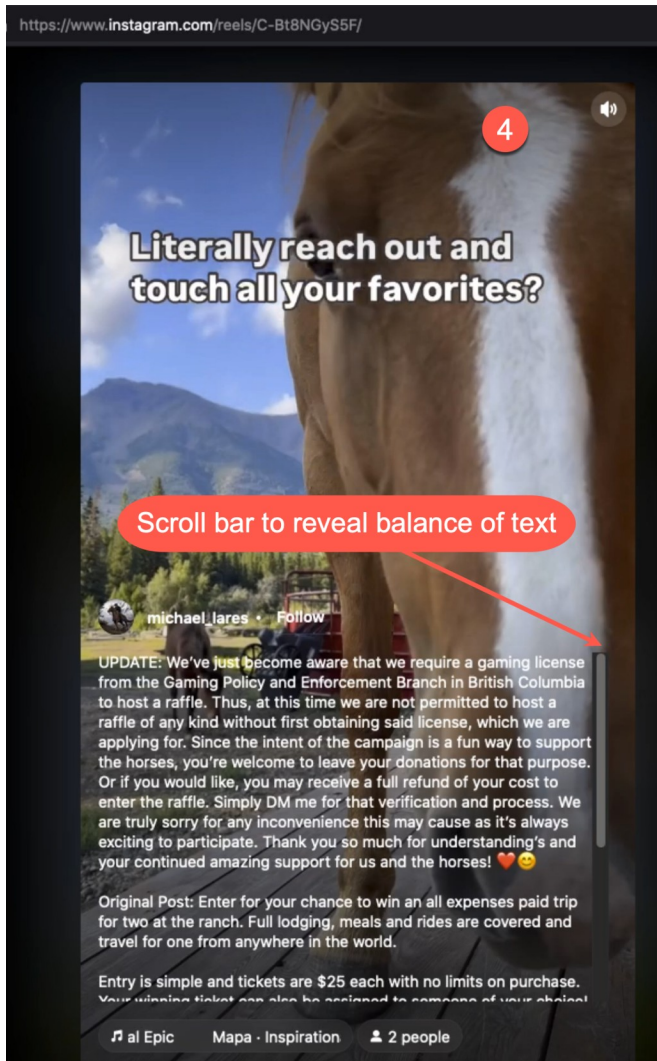
3

michael_lares · Follow

UPDATE: We've just become aware that we require a gaming lic...

more

Inspirational Epic Mapa 2 people





michael_lares

Follow

Message

2,306 posts

175K followers

1,751 following

6

Michael Lares-Flying "L" Ranch

Public figure

Living in peace off-grid with my beautiful family. Focused on the well being of horses in this majestic Canadian... more

exclusive.flyingranch.ca + 1



Mommas Jo...



Second Cha...



Second Cha...



Ask me anyt...



Captain! 🤩



Tank gets st...

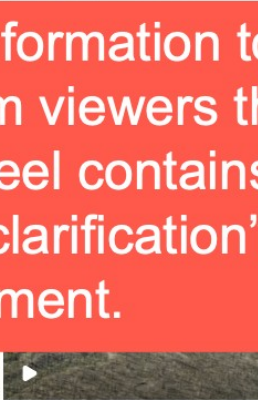
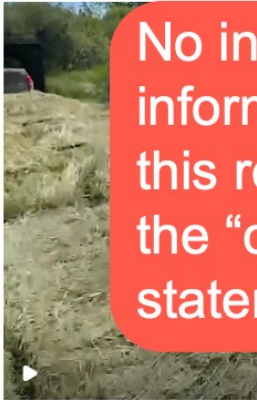
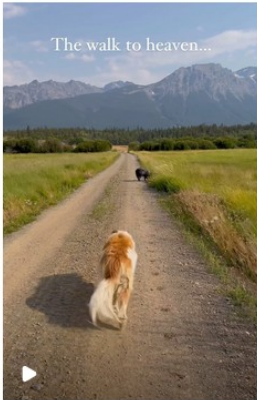


Challenger

POSTS

REELS

TAGGED



No information to inform viewers that this reel contains the "clarification" statement.



7

POSTS

Legal Administrative Assistant: Barbara Both
E-Mail: bpoth@mcquarrie.com
Direct Line: 04-568 7961

February 16, 2024

Image of "pin" [Red arrow pointing to a red box containing contact information]

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: Instagram Defamation of Michael Lares and Flying "L" Ranch Ltd.

We are legal counsel for Mr. Lares and Flying "L" Ranch Ltd. concerning the above matter.

To the extent you are a recipient, viewer or follower of certain false and defamatory statements or videos about our clients which have been posted to the Instagram platform, please be aware of the following. The good reputations of Mr. Lares and the Flying "L" Ranch Ltd. are being tarnished by certain known and unknown online authors. By implication, Mr. Lares' family is also being maligned. Please notify us as soon as possible if you receive any publications impugning our clients' reputations. Please do not republish, forward or reproduce any such videos or posts. Republication of defamatory material could expose you to a lawsuit for defamation.

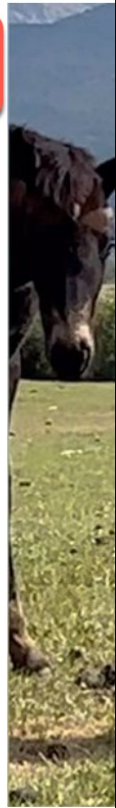
We will be following up with the authors of the defamatory posts in due course, as our clients intend to pursue those authors to the fullest extent possible, including seeking damages and possibly injunctive relief. We are also following up with Instagram directly concerning these posts.

To be clear, any post or other media on Instagram which tends to lower the reputation of either of our clients in the minds of a reasonable person is *prima facie*, defamatory, and will result in a lawsuit against anyone behind that.

Yours truly,

MCQUARRIE HUNTER LLP

ROYAL J. MORTON*
Partner



8

Welcome to the Flying L Ranch! Located in the heart of [Nemiah Valley](#), we are a full-function, off-grid horse and hay ranch. Owned and operated by the [Lares Family](#), we've grown into a self-sufficient horse sanctuary focused on helping local wildies in need. Collaborating with the local Indigenous community of the [Xeni Gwet'in](#), we aim to assist in the protection and care of local wild horse herds. After being globally

— Captured Aug 1, 2024 @12:48 ET —




michael_lares 15h
Olexy, Lesfm · Me and You



But even among an ominous disaster like the slide and its future impact, there is still much beauty to behold.



Visit link >

 Win a trip for two at the ranch

So join in our raffle to win a trip for two to come see us and partake in all the wonderment!

Reply to michael_lares...





— Captured Aug 1, 2024 @12:48 ET —




michael_lares 13h



Win a trip for two to come help me! I could use a hand! 🥲



Visit link >

 Win a trip for two!



Reply to michael_lares...



— Captured Aug 1, 2024 @12:48 ET —



Donate to
Flying L Ranch LTD

Win a trip to the Ranch! Travel paid for 1 with one week all expenses paid for two at the ranch. \$25 per ticket no limits.

\$0
CAD



Make this a monthly donation

You authorize PayPal to pay Flying L Ranch LTD \$0.00 around this day each month. You can change or cancel at anytime in your PayPal account settings.

 **Donate with PayPal**

Donate with Debit or Credit Card