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Fort Erie to accept U.S. currency

By Robert J. Summers
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FORT ERIE, Ont. — American money is back in the good graces of the folks who run the Fort Erie Race Track.

After a year of accepting only Canadian currency at the betting windows, the Fort will reverse its policy and also take U.S. greenbacks when the thoroughbred season opens May 1.

"We will be dealing in American dollars," James A. Thibert, chief executive of the new non-profit organization that took over the track Jan. 1, said at a news conference Thursday.

The decision reverses a one-year policy that Thibert said many American customers took as a "slap in the face."

Thibert said the policy is one of a number of changes aimed at improving customer service during the 113-year-old track's 78-day meet.

"We do want to bring back our friends and our patrons from Buffalo," said Thibert, head of the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium.

He announced appointments of six new middle managers, including the return of John Whitson as racing secretary and Brian Jabelmann as property manager. Whitson held the same position in 1978. Jabelmann was track superintendent 10 years ago.

Thibert said Bonnie Loubert, chief executive officer, and Herb McGirr, director of racing/operations/marketing, will leave by July 1. He said a search is on for a new chief operating officer, who may be named in a few weeks.