

**Presentation to CEC panel on sustainability of the Manitoba hog industry  
March 14, 2007**

Good afternoon gentleman. My name is Richard Prejet and I am a hog producer from Notre Dame de Lourdes. I would like to start by giving a brief background of myself and the companies that I am a partner in, Porcherie Lac du Onze (LDO) and Porcherie Notre Dame (PND).

I was born and raised in Notre Dame de Lourdes on a grain and dairy operation. After completing grade twelve, I moved to Winnipeg to take the my diploma in Agriculture at the University of Manitoba with the intention of somehow one day returning to Notre Dame to farm.

During my agriculture course I had the privilege of meeting Mr Bruce Campbell of Landmark Feeds and seeing that farming was out of the question at this time, I decided to accept his offer to become dairy specialist with LFI. I was with Landmark for seven years and all the while had the intention of returning to farming. During this time, Elite Swine was being developed and I soon saw that the hog industry might be the only way for me to return home and be involved in agriculture.

In 1989, my wife Roseline and I moved to Notre Dame and built a 150-sow farrow to feeder operation that we expanded to 200 sows in 1990. Being highly leveraged, those first few years were difficult and there was very little time off since I ran the operation on my own.

In 1993 I was approached to become involved in a 1200 sow operation in southeastern Manitoba. Since the last few years had been somewhat difficult we decided to accept, much to the disappointment of our family, friends, community and ourselves.

This in turn was the catalyst to the development of Porcherie Lac du Onze (LDO). A group of local residents approached my wife and I to see if there would be the potential to build such an operation in Notre Dame to keep us there all the while creating employment in the area. These local residents were all very strong, community-orientated families who were willing to take the risk to make things happen in Notre Dame.

Today LDO and PND are operations with sales in excess of 10 million dollars, employ 17 full time staff and have a payroll in excess of 600,000\$. We purchase a large percentage of our supplies and services from local companies and are very active in supporting the local activities in the community as evidenced by our 100,000\$ donation to the Wellness Centre currently under construction in Notre Dame.

In fact, the existence of LDO and PND has led to further hog industry developments in our area and to the contributions to the wellness centre as well as many other community projects and activities.

All this to say that in our community, the hog industry has been a success story ; the economic and social impact have been very positive.

Over the last 25 years, I have seen many changes in the hog industry.

For the last several years our operation has filed **manure management** plans completed by someone who is properly trained. In our first years, manure application wasn't done in balance with the crop being grown. Now we monitor nutrient levels paying special attention to phosphorous levels. Every field is tested before application, manure is analyzed several times and manure applied at recommended agronomic rates. All manure is injected with a dragline system to reduce

nitrogen losses, reduce odours and minimize damage to the roads. We follow up with lab analysis and monitor soil tests in the following years. There is a very tight window for applicators to get their work done in the fall so we have to use past experience and expected levels of some nutrients to formulate a management plan but we adjust from year to year.

**As for odour**, we have implemented measures to reduce or control it. We cover our lagoons as required; we keep in touch with our closest neighbours and encourage them to let us know if odours become a problem. This is where we need mutual trust. Both our neighbours and us know that there will be odours at times but as long as everyone understands that this is part of the reality of living in the country along with the noise of tractors and the dust of combines then a compromise is usually easy to reach. I personally live a mile from one of our sites and don't want to constantly live with the smell of hogs so I make sure it is kept to a minimum.

**Ground water quality and supply** is something else that we monitor. Water samples are taken at least once or twice per year and results submitted to the department of Conservation. Our employees track weekly water consumption and are encouraged to use water wisely. Fixing leaking water nipples and minimizing soaking times are part of the norm.

As time goes on and more evidence-based research is available, Porcherie Lac du Onze will continue to review and revise its methods and adopt new technologies as appropriate to improve manure management, control odours and protect water quality.

In the last 25 years, I have also been witness to a number of negative incidents.

We've had to deal with things such as public municipal meetings and I personally have been attacked and accused. It is disappointing to see that some resort to such tactics. I am sure you have heard and will hear all kinds of comments at these presentations about the hog industry and the people involved in it. It seems that the more extreme the lie the more chance that some part of it may become believable.

Please keep in mind that the majority of the people in the hog industry in Manitoba are good honest people that have strong farming backgrounds and strong attachments to the land and the environment. It is important that we support and encourage these people to continue to provide high quality pork that meets the demand of our country and the world instead of creating roadblocks.

We must acknowledge the tremendous amount of work and research that has occurred and continues to occur in the hog industry to protect the environment.

Environmental regulations have been put in place. We need to allow time for the regulations to have an impact on the end result. We need to continue to monitor the situation on an ongoing basis and to enforce these regulations to ensure compliance by all.

We do not need to stop the hog industry from growing for a minority who attempts to bypass those rules. *That would be like taking all vehicles off the road because some people drive over the posted speed limit.*

We need to be reasonable and use common sense. It seems that most of the rules and regulations have been put in place are because of the fear of a massive expansion by large corporate giants. Although some claim that they want to protect smaller operations and family farms, these are exactly the type of operations that are being pushed out. So

who is going to survive the future in an over regulated hog industry? Who is going to be willing to attend heated council meetings?

Picture this.

*A husband and wife have a son and daughter in law that wants to farm. The size of the farm is too small to support two families and the parents are too young to retire. Land is either too expensive or not even for sale in the area. Dairy and poultry is near impossible to get in to.*

*Wouldn't a couple of hog barns be a perfect fit? Big enough to hire some full time help to have some time off once in awhile; fertilizer at a fraction of the cost of commercial fertilizer and with a nutrient plan even better than commercial fertilizer.*

*But, the father sees the hassles of getting a permit and the friction it may cause in the community and even if he does get it built the ongoing time and money to be invest in filling out forms, meeting all the rules and regulations for manure management, Canadian Quality Assurance, trace ability, workplace health and safety, dealing with opposition and controversy etc.. It all seems quite overwhelming.*

*The son and his family move away to the city and the parents sell the farm to a neighbour.*

This scenario is all too common.

Again, we need to use common sense. Not having rules and regulations is not an option but adding to what we presently have is too much and the end result may be a nonexistent hog industry. But for a small group of vocal opponents, it appears that this is the only thing that would finally satisfy them.

The right to farm must be protected but not by producing more rules and regulations to allow farming but by not creating rules and regulations that make it impractical or nearly impossible to farm in the first place.

Hog farmers are good honest people who want to get things done and do them right. Hog farmers are not criminals waiting for an opportunity to break the law. Hog farmers need support and access to resources and expertise. The type of information and support that is accessible through organizations such as the Prairie Swine Centre, the University of Manitoba and Manitoba Pork Council.

**One of the recommendations to the government should be to support these organizations that are experts in the hog industry and the work that they do.**

**Another recommendation to government could be to review land use planning.**

Forming planning districts is a great idea but a world of troubles can be created.

I.e. Expansion may be permitted in select areas but those areas may not have the required resources i.e. water, clay base, sufficient spread acres and labour within a reasonable distance. Existing grain farmers who would like to build may not be able to because they live in a restricted area. So if they can't build close to home where they can keep an eye on the operation and use the manure to fertilize their own land then a very viable option is gone.

Another problem is in municipalities where the pressure from anti hog people has been so great that good, honest, level headed councillors have been treated as liars and servants to the hog companies, and have decided "I don't need this B.S." and have stepped down only to be replaced by anti hog people. In many cases good people who may run for council will be discouraged for the fear that someone may apply for a permit to build a hog barn. What we end up with

in the end is a situation where the hog industry is cut off at every turn. New operations will not be built, older operations will not be replaced and the whole service industry surrounding the hog industry will slowly begin to waste away.

(Conclusion)

We have an opportunity here to show Manitobans what the hog industry is all about. As much as I disagree with the pause that our government has placed on the hog industry, I believe that the study into the sustainability of the Manitoba Hog Industry will reveal that Manitoba hog producers in collaboration with the organizations aforementioned are managing the Manitoba hog industry in a responsible and appropriate manner and in accordance with the best practices recommended by experts.

I also believe that when this is over we will be positioned to grow in the primary production as well as the processing industries and this in turn will fuel a Manitoba economy for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank You.

I would be glad to answer any questions.