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Presentation to: Clean Environment Commission (CEC)

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Presentation to:  
**Clean Environment Commission (CEC) Scoping Meetings**  
Review of the "Environment Sustainability" of Hog Production Industry in Manitoba March 2007

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Good Afternoon / Evening members of the Clean Environment Commission panel, and ladies and gentlemen of the audience.

My name is Larry Hofer, I am a member of Marble Ridge Hutterite Colony, and a hog producer.

I sincerely thank-you for the opportunity to present my comments regarding the environment sustainability of the hog production industry in Manitoba.

Marble Ridge Colony is a community that lives and breathes agriculture. Agriculture is an integral part of our lives.

Naturally, it is a major source of revenue, and our livelihood is dependant on it. Agriculture is the basis of our way of life and it enables us to maintain our independence,



our Hutterian religion and sustain our communal way of life. We truly are a family farm.

We need to be able to foresee growth in agriculture to give our children hope for the future and the guarantee of jobs that would keep them in our community.

You see agriculture is extremely important to the sustainability of our colony, our way of life and our people.

Who is more concerned about sustainable agriculture then the farmer?

Who is a stronger Stewart of the land then the farmer?

We are concerned about the protection of our animals and the land that provides for our livelihood, and we as farmers care about the environment.

To address the current concerns regarding the environment and manure management. I would like to address some of the things Marble Ridge does for (Phos) levels and odor controls. All of our solids from the barns go through a manure separator. This process syphons out most of the (Phos). It also helps



reduce odor, and makes it a lot easier to transport the liquid manure. We decided to take this extra step even though it cost well in excess of \$140,000 because it greatly enhanced our ability to deal with the challenges of handling waste in an environmentally friendly way. This procedure seems to work quite well. The separator is located on the colony and the water contents after the separation are pumped into an earthen lagoon with a liner.

The manure before separation was given a (Phos) test and came back at 18.2 lbs. / 1000 gal. The test after separation was 0.0227 lbs. / 1000 gal.

In November 2006 the government came to us and said Nitrogen and Phos is now turned around, up till now we monitored our manure by nitrogen for how much we put in the field, now it's monitored for how many gallons per acre by (Phos) levels. If we do the math here there is no way we could inject enough manure into the ground to get our (Phos) to a 35 lb. level for "let's say, a barley crop". Therefore, I'm thinking, we have our (Phos) level very much under control.

We are also in the process of working with a company from Quebec with a product called (Maxizyme plus) which we would have an additional



annual cost of approx. \$60,000. We are doing this because this product reduces (Phos) levels, and helps reduce odor, which we feel is very important for our neighbors and or livelihood. We also believe this product will be very helpful to keep our well water clean.

The test we have taken showed us the (Phos) level went from 900 down to 450 in 8 weeks in slurry stores also for drains and pits. In the barn, a job that used to take 20 min. of washing now only takes only 5 min. The (Maxizyme plus) seems to do a great job in breaking down the solids. The odor in the barn and ammonia has dropped significantly.

Currently in Manitoba, approximately 30,000 sows are using these products and we are seeing amazing, consistent results. The environment is healthier thanks to soluble phosphates in the slurry, and better assimilation of nutritional elements by soil and plants. The animals absorb feed better and their immune system is reinforced. We breathe better air, and the neighborhood no longer has to tolerate unpleasant odors.

It was quite impressive just last week when one of our neighbors (whom I might add had quite a struggle to see a lagoon go up  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from his house) met



with one of our members in town. He asked Darius when we figured we will start pumping manure into the big lagoon. Well, Darius was a little shocked at this, and he told him we had started pumping into the lagoon November 20, 2006. We were quite pleased to hear this from our neighbor.

The government of Manitoba's decision to implement a pause in the building of barns causes us grave concerns, Marble Ridge is forced to sell weanlings because we do not have a matching hog finisher barn to our sow production facilities. This law only makes it tougher on us the farmer.

We live by rules put in place, but this pause makes it nearly impossible for us to make a living and to develop future Hutterite colonies, which will house our young people.

As farmers and hog producers, we work hard to produce safe, quality pork for our customers in an environmentally sustainable manner. We take our responsibility for wise stewardship of our air, soil, natural plants, wildlife, and water resources seriously.

We support the Manitoba government's efforts to protect and maintain our surface and groundwater supply for current and future use. Manitoba's pork



industry, and Manitoba hog producers very existence are tied to a sufficiently reliable source of high quality water, water that is critical to the raising of our livestock. Good water is also vitally important to me and my fellow livestock farmers who live, work, and raise families on our colony. We must have the ability to raise our livestock cost effectively. We must have the ability and freedom to be able to grow and make our living in a responsible manner.

We also concern ourselves with nutrient management, by testing all of our land so the right amounts of nutrients are applied.

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring mineral. In humans, it is the second most abundant mineral. It is also important for crop nutrition, for helping root development, and helping crops grow faster.

As most of us are aware of too much Phosphorus in water increases the presence of algae blooms that threaten other plants and organisms in our lakes and rivers. However only about 13% of the Phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg comes from agriculture, but only about 1% of Phosphorus entering Lake Winnipeg can be linked to hog farms.



If every pig in Manitoba would disappear tomorrow, do you think one acre of land would go unfertilized? The answer is practically none.

The question is would you prefer the use of chemical fertilizer or organic hog fertilizer in the form of liquid manure injected into the soils to feed our crops?

Hog producers are not the only cause for this increase in Phosphorus levels. The rising levels of Phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg come from a variety of sources, for example: industry, human waste, cities and municipalities, natural deposits, dishwasher detergent, and lawn fertilizers. In our every day life, in our community, we can remove phosphorus from our households by using phosphorus-free laundry soap, dishwashing soap and lawn fertilizers, and reducing the use of car and truck wash soap. It is quite feasible to wash a vehicle mechanically without soap.

We believe that we are very responsible in our manure management along with the rest of our day to day farm life. We invite anyone and everyone to visit our colony to see our lifestyle and our life on the farm.



In 1970, the government of Canada banned the production of all detergents containing more than 20% Phosphate. Exempt from the ban were detergents used in dishwashers, car washes, and manufacturing. We are as concerned with the protection of our environment as you are.

The attitudes of water consumers have evolved over time – and over many generations. There is no question that we must be more careful in our stewardship of this precious, life sustaining resource.

Agriculture is our livelihood and the livelihood of our neighbors, but it is getting increasingly harder to sustain. Five of our neighbors can no longer make a living on the farm. Many of the men have moved to Alberta to work in the oil industry, leaving their wives and children at home in Manitoba. We don't want to see our children from Marble Ridge Colony leave our Hutterite way of life, and our traditions, to find work elsewhere, because our farming way of life loses its purpose, or is no longer sustainable. This could lead to a very sad future for our colony and our way of life. We are depending on a sustainable environment in the future to offer hope to the children on our colony, so that they will have the choice to remain in our community, to work and to live.



Thank-you for your time and consideration of my comments and concerns.