Good evening members of the Clean Environment Commission panel and ladies and gentlemen of the audience.

My name is Sam Hofer and I stand here today as a representative of the Spring Valley Hutterite Colony. Our colony is located 15 miles southeast of the City of Brandon in the Rural Municipality of Cornwallis. Our Colony consists of 18 families.

Before I get into the main part of my presentation, allow me to paint a small economic picture of agriculture for you. When the subsidies for transporting grain to the ports were removed in the 1990's, farmers on the prairies, and particularly in Manitoba, were most affected. All of a sudden, producers found that they could no longer grow and ship crops and make enough money to support their families. Transportation costs ate up to one-third of the gross receipts and most of the profits from crops which forced farmers to do one of three things to survive:
1) get out of farming altogether,
2) expand farming operations or
3) expand, or get into, livestock production to survive.

With rising crop input costs and commodity prices which have essentially flat-lined over the last 30 years, many producers have looked to livestock production and, more specifically, hog production to survive.

In the early nineties, Spring Valley Colony had to make a different decision. With low grain prices, the crow rate gone, and several families to support, we had to make a decision to expand our farrow-to-finish hog operation from 550 sows to 1,050 sows.

We are proud to be a part of Manitoba's pork industry which is recognized as producing some of the finest quality pork in Canada, as well as the world over. Manitoba exports approximately 80% of our pork to other countries like United States and Japan where consumers demand the pork quality that we are able to produce.

We are also responsible to our environment because the survival of our industry is dependent on the health of the environment and its resources. And you can rest assured that we are more tightly regulated now than ever before. There are more regulatory safeguards in place to protect our environment now than even ten years ago. For example, the new Water

Protection Act which was passed just last year, clearly states that **"No person shall discharge, release or apply a substance containing nitrogen or phosphorus directly to a water body or into a groundwater feature, except as authorized under *The Environment Act*."** Some towns and communities are still allowed to discharge wastewater effluent, within the prescribed limits of their Environment Act licences, **HOWEVER, discharges from agriculture are NOT ALLOWED**. Hog producers know that the consequences of non-compliance can be severe to our environment and our livelihood, and so we have had to adjust our environmental management practices to comply. For example, winter spreading of manure is no longer allowed so many producers have had to build additional storage to contain manure throughout the winter months before spreading in the spring, summer or fall.

Furthermore, agriculture will soon be required to adhere to the proposed Nutrient Management and Water Quality Management Zones regulations as well as the proposed Phosphorus Threshold limits. Under the **proposed** Phosphorus Threshold limits, Manitoba agricultural producers will be required to have access to a large enough land base to balance nutrients on the basis of Phosphorus limits - not just nitrogen limits as has been done in the past. This requirement makes these regulations MORE restrictive than even other jurisdictions in Canada, such as those in Ontario.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Nutrients, regardless of the source - whether it be commercial fertilizers or from manure - are very valuable and necessary inputs to crop, grass and forage production. We do not want to misuse it nor do we want to lose it unnecessarily to the environment. We have used manure as a nutrient for years on the colony to offset the cost of commercial fertilizer.

We hire a consulting firm of certified agronomists to test our soils and manure in order to develop a scientifically sound nutrient management plan. The firm is Agri-Trend Agrology Ltd which is headquartered in Red Deer, Alberta, but has offices and skilled professionals across the prairies, including Manitoba. Ron Curtis, a certified agronomist with Agri-Trend, works with our field manager to oversee the soil testing of every field and to develop a nutrient plan which balances the nutrient needs of our crops with soil nutrient availability and manure applications. We inject our manure in fields that need higher N, P & K levels to grow crops like canola, corn and alfalfa. We

also rotate manure application on fields every 3 or 4 years, to allow nutrient levels to be depleted. The high cost of energy and commercial fertilizer can be offset by the use of manure making it a very valuable resource to Spring Valley Farms.

To better illustrate this benefit for you, our 1,050 sow farrow-to-finish operation produces approximately, 6,500,000 gallons of manure each year. Every 1000 gallons of manure contains approximately 21 lbs of nitrogen. On average, we inject 3,500 gallons of manure per acre of land for a total of 73.5 lbs of nitrogen per acre. The current price for nitrogen is $0.53 per lb. If we inject our manure on 1,857 acres of land at this rate, the nitrogen alone is worth $72,339. Why would anybody misuse or waste a valuable and natural source of nitrogen?

MANURE MANAGEMENT

With regards to manure, let's face it - one of the inescapable by-products of the livestock industry is MANURE. This includes ALL livestock sectors - not just the hog sector. Yet we hear many uninformed people say that the hog industry is **entirely** to blame for our water quality problems which is wrong. You only need to read a report recently written by Manitoba Conservation called "Examination of the Environmental Sustainability of the Hog Industry in Manitoba" to know this. In this report, agriculture (AS A WHOLE) was estimated to contribute **only 6%** of the nitrogen load and **15%** of the phosphorus load, to Lake Winnipeg. These numbers include contributions from other livestock sectors (like beef, dairy and poultry) as well as the grains/oilseeds and vegetable sectors **- BUT the hog industry was not singled out**. FURTHERMORE, the report also points out that contributions from NATURAL WATERSHED PROCESSES make up **21%** and **17%** of the total amount, respectively - which exceeds agriculture's estimated contribution to the problem!

You might ask "Can agriculture's potential impacts on water be further reduced?" All I can say is that producers are already going to great extremes and expense to meet the requirements of new stricter regulations. For example, under the relatively new Manitoba Livestock Mortalities and Manure Management Regulation under the Environment Act, the management and disposal of manure is more tightly regulated now than ten years ago. The regulations require large livestock operators to file an annual manure management plan which describes how we manage and dispose of

our manure. Agri-Trend Agrologists Ltd submits the manure management plan on behalf of the hog operation at our colony. And we hire Red Hand Ltd., from Souris (Boissevain), a certified manure applicator, to dispose of our manure in accordance with the manure management plan.

WATER QUALITY

Good quality water is vital to the health of our families and hog operations.

Spring Valley moved to Brandon, Manitoba, in 1951. We test our water every year to monitor trends or changes in water quality. As of today, we are pleased to report that we still have top quality water with no nitrates, no coliform or bacteria. It is still fit for consumption by our infants after 51 years of use. If all hog operations caused water quality problems, could we make such a claim about our own water? We feel that the hog industry is often falsely blamed for many of the water quality problems you will probably hear about over the course of these hearings.

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

Responsible environmental management is a part of the overall operation of our hog barns. We have worked closely with Manitoba Conservation, the Rural Municipality of Cornwallis and our ward councillor, Emil Egert, in obtaining a permit for our manure storage facility.

We hired Glen Newton, a registered professional engineer, from Brandon, to design our earth manure storage facility and the monitoring well network around the lagoon.

Mac's Rental Construction from MacGregor, which has a lot of experience in building engineered earth storage facilities, was hired to construct our manure storage structure in accordance with regulations and engineering standards.

Our colony has been complying with Manitoba's new regulations and it costs our colony an additional $55,000 each year for independent soil-testing, manure management plans for each field, and manure application services. You may hear similar cost figures from other operations as well. In our opinion, these requirements serve to improve public confidence in the sustainability of our industry, however, in view of the high cost of

environmental management, we recommend that government consider providing financial support to offset the cost of these services.

In closing, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak at this hearing and to shed some light about the hog industry and our own operation. I hope the audience will better understand the contributions agriculture and the hog sector are already making to protect our environment. Furthermore, I hope that the audience is now more aware of some of the regulations which are in place to ensure that livestock expansion in Manitoba can take place in a sustainable fashion.

Submitted by
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Minister
Spring Valley Colony