

First of all, I'd like to thank the Clean Environment Commission for giving me a time to make a presentation at your hearing.

My name is Wayne Nichol. My brother, Kelvin, and I farm 3000 acres of crop land. We have 130 cow calf operation and a 5200 finisher hog operation. In addition, we have 40% ownership in Cloverleaf Pork which is a 10,400 feeder hog operation.

To begin with, I would like to explain how we got into the hog industry. Back 6 or 7 years ago, grain prices were really low and the farm was struggling financially. We were not making very much progress. Kelvin and I talked about this a lot and decided we had to do something more or risk losing the business. Rather than net bigger in the grain and cow calf operation, we decided to diversify into the hog industry. It looked like there were some good benefits to that. The industry showed, for example that there was a decent return on investment and the value of the manure as a fertilizer would definitely reduce our fertilizer costs. The financial benefit was most important to us. As of today, it has been good to us with a reasonable return on investment and the fertilizer benefit has been phenomenal.

When we built these barns, we followed the Farm Practice Guidelines for Hog Producers in Manitoba. The lagoons were built to specifications and Manitoba Conservation was there to inspect the clay packed lagoons as they were being built. There are monitoring wells on all four sides of the lagoons. This was a great idea. We sample the water from these monitoring wells every year to check for any signs of seepage. I am happy to say that there is no sign of any seepage or pollution of the water. Everything is working the way it was meant to work. The rules and regulations that we have in place, we can live with. So far, there has been common sense used. I am concerned though with what will happen after these hearings. Hopefully, any new rules and regulations will be based on common sense and we will be able to continue building the industry.

Before we spread the manure, we complete a manure management plan and take soil samples. We then submit the completed plan to the Conservation Department. We must follow the recommendations and ensure that we do not over fertilize. Farmers do not want to waste the nutrients as it is costly to do that. You only put the nutrients into the soil that the plants can use. We use the airway injection system to inject the fertilizer to eliminate any run off. This is a very good system and one of the best ways to do the job. We, as farmers, are always trying to look at ways to maintain the land and improve it for the next generation.

On our farm, we have been zero tilling for approximately 20 years. Zero tilling stops erosion caused by washing of most of the runways and stops wind erosion of our soil. By adding zero tilling and hog manure to our land, we are seeing the organic matter of the soil improving and the benefits are showing up every year.

The special nutrients in hog manure eliminate the need for commercial fertilizer in these fields. With our 2 barns and the cost of fertilizer at \$800.00/tonne, the cost savings are

huge for our farm – approximately \$60,000/year. If you add the organic matter increase in the soil and cost savings together, it adds significantly to the profitability of our farm.

Odour can be an issue no doubt. To help minimize the odour, we cover the lagoons in the spring and patch up again in the fall with barley straw. This definitely helps. High humidity mornings or ho humid days seem to be the worst. I'd say that we have approximately 25-30 days out of the 365 days in a year where the odour is noticeable. The good thing is that there is thousands of dollars being spent on research every year to come up with affordable solutions to the odour concerns. I am convinced that they will come up with something in the next few years. Plastic covers are cost prohibitive and they only last for 5-8 years so the economics of that do not pencil out. The one thing we must remember is that hog odour is not the only odour out there. Cattle feedlots have odour as do chicken barns, town lagoons, sprays as well as pulp and paper mills – just to mention a few. So, why all the fuss about hog barns? Pigs are like any animal including humans – they have waste products too.

The one thing I want to emphasize is farmers are probably the best stewards of the land that there is. We grew up on the land and you work and live on your farm 365 days a year. You learn as you go how to keep your soil healthy and work to make it produce. I'm not convinced that farmers are the real culprits in the nutrient loading of Lake Winnipeg or other lakes. There is science out there that tells us that we are a very small part of the problem. There are a lot worse polluters out there than farmers. Big factories and cities are dumping their waste into the water systems. I think we are such a minority and an easy target. We, as farmers, are doing everything we can and keep our eyes and ears open to see what more we can do. If anything does present itself, we are the first to deal with it. Let's face it – we all want clean water! That's a given!

The one last thing I want to mention and you probably already heard this or will hear it is the benefit it has provided to our community. We have 150-200 young people with their families living her in Killarney because of the hog industry. These people would be in Alberta or Winnipeg or Brandon or somewhere else other than here. Rural Manitoba needs these young people – we can't all live in the cities! After all, someone has to be in the rural communities working on our farms to provide the cheap food that the Canadian farmer provides.

Thank you for your time and attention to this presentation.