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Presentation to the Clean Environment Commission

Good afternoon Mr. Chairperson and members of the Clean Environment Commission.

My name is Peter Manness I am 28 years old, I farm with my dad and brother in Domain Manitoba, 20 mins southwest of Winnipeg in the Red River Valley. I also work full time in the city as a farm management consultant. Up until December of this past year I worked as a certified manure management planner for a large swine organization. Today I come speaking as a swine producer. My family has been involved in the swine business for over 40 years. We have a small finisher barn in our home yard and are involved with a group of producers in a larger finishing operation where our home section is used for manure spread acres.

My brother David and I are both interested in continuing our family's farming operation. In order for this to happen we will need to expand or diversify our farming operation. Ever since we began discussions on how we would grow our operation we have always talked about hogs being a significant component to our plans. Not only do we opportunity in the Swine industry itself, but also with the ability to use manure to benefit our grain farm. By using manure we are able to save thousands of dollars on commercial fertilizer and improve the productivity of our soil. I understand the need for regulations for livestock producers. My concern is that public pressure will force additional regulations on swine producers that will significantly harm their profitability while having little or no effect on nutrient loading in our Lakes and Streams. I do not agree with swine producers continuing to be singled out and forced to defend our actions in the public arena. It is these reasons that I feel the need to speak to you today.

In the 90's and early 2000's the hog industry was looking for opportunities to expand. There were many good proposals that were turned down throughout Manitoba in the middle of wide open prairie because of political pressure especially at the municipal level. Instead of providing an appeals process for producers or some type of certainty in the permitting process, the provincial government did very little to help. So hog operators built their barns in areas where there was less opposition. This has contributed to the current situation of too many barns in the southeast corner of the province. In some cases these barns were built with only the minimum land requirements available. Now as the current spread acres are not adequate there is no more land available. Even with changes to the planning act there continues to be no certainty for producers who wish to expand or build large livestock operations, especially hog barns. Applicants can meet all requirements set out by Municipalities and the Province and still be turned down.

Our farm exists in an area where there is a low density of livestock operations. Our clay soil lends itself well to both manure storage and to retaining nutrients in the soil from manure application. Manitoba needs more finishing barns to reduce our dependence on the US market. This is especially important with the impending implementation of Country Of Origin Labeling in less than 18 months. This is the type of operation that we are hoping to build on our farm. These are also the barns that have historically come with the stiffest opposition because they tend to smell more and provide fewer jobs in the community. The provincial government needs to step forward and establish a process where if producers meet the requirements for sustainable spread acres, acknowledge concerns from local neighbors and meet land use planning guidelines they should be able to build or at minimum appeal the decision. This is not only a hindrance to existing producers, but people moving in from other provinces or countries hoping to establish farms of their own. How can you explain to a young farmer who has come from Germany hoping to raise his family in the wide open spaces of the Red River Valley that he cannot expand his hog operation on his farm when he has met all of the

environmental approvals, land use planning requirements, and his operation sits almost two miles from his closet neighbor.

Currently in the Technical Review process Manitoba Conservation and Manitoba Water Stewardship give two different recommendations for land requirement calculations. Both of these organizations sat on the Phosphorus Expert Committee. Why do they not use the same formulas and assumptions for calculating what are acceptable amount of spread acres in an application.

So much has been said about how hog farmers need to do there part. People talk about how the city is spending billions of dollars doing there part to reduce phosphorus. The truth is that hog farmers have been doing their part, consistently improving their practices over the last 10 years. As few as 12 years ago most manure was applied using a process called big gun irrigation. If you have not seen it I am sure you can imagine how that worked. Application rates were far in excess of crop requirements. Today the majority of liquid manure is injected or direct incorporated into the soil. Practices like GPS mapping, flow meters and N to P ration monitoring are common today. Producers are trying out new ideas like in crop application techniques and variable rate technology as well. Application rates are matched as closely as possible to the individual crop nutrient requirements. In this 10 year time frame the cost of manure application has more than doubled in price. Manure is treated as a valuable resource not a waste product.

Hog producers have also focused their feeding programs to reduce the amount of excess nutrients in their feed through phase feeding and the use of enzymes like Phytase. Through application and feed improvements producers have reduced the amount of phosphorus being applied to each acre in some cases by as much as 80%. This is what we have accomplished in the last 10 years. What can we accomplish on our own in the next 10 years?

There is currently the opportunity to further reduce the phosphorus used in some swine diets, but restrictions put on by the CFIA limit the full benefit of using Phytase in feed. The CFIA sets out a minimum available phosphorus level in swine feed. Because Phytase in and of itself does not contain phosphorus it does not count towards this minimum. There is an application for an exemption that can be used for individual feed rations; however this is impractical because every time a producer uses a different ration he would have to re apply. For a feed company this could mean 1,000's of applications. This has debate has been going on between swine nutritionists and CFIA for a number of years to no avail.

Recommendations

As a citizen and hog producer I realize that there will be a cost to reduce nutrient loading in Lake Winnipeg. I am not however willing to open my wallet and be forced into making changes that will cost me money and provide no benefit. I will not be forced into changing for the sake of changing.

1. Our current barn at home was built in 1974 it is by no means new, however we still think it has a few good years left in it. It currently has enough storage for about three months. This means that we need to spread manure at least a couple of times in the winter on frozen ground. It has been established that most of the phosphorus entering Lake Winnipeg from agricultural lands comes in the spring time. I agree that this practice on our farm needs to cease. The government has imposed a winter spreading ban for all operations in the Red River Valley. Why do we not also include the rest of the province and municipalities as well. For our operation we will face a significant decision. Do we build a lagoon and continue to run our barn at home or do we shut it down. If the government is concerned with the cost to small producers then consider this. Currently the Quebec government is offering to pay up to 90% for producers to expand their manure storages. If the provincial government is serious about this problem why don't they do the same?

2. It has been well documented the benefits of injecting or incorporating manure. Nutrients worked into the soil are less likely to leave the field. It is time that injection or incorporation after a short time be mandatory for all manure application on annual crop land. The technology currently exists to apply this to all manure types on most cropping systems including minimum tillage.

3. The provincial government needs to assist producers in lowering the nutrients being excreted from the pig. The easiest way to do this is by limiting the nutrients going into the pig. Specifically the Provincial Government needs to push the Federal Government and the CFIA to update the phosphorus requirements in Swine Feed. The provincial government should provide funding for the next step in this process as well, which is low phytate feed grains (if they are not already doing so). These grains will further improve the ability of livestock to absorb phosphorus out of the coarse grain portion of their diet.

4. Producers need more certainty in the approval process. There needs to be a way that sites that meet the necessary requirements have an opportunity for appeal. One idea would be to set up an appeal board with representation from the Livestock Sector, Municipal Planning and the Provincial Government.

5. In general the current existing regulations are adequate. The Environmental Livestock Team at Manitoba Conservation should be praised for working with producers to comply with regulations. I am convinced that this relationship has lead to greater compliance in the entire industry. I think this attitude needs to continue, but also those producers who continue to practice willful disobedience of the existing regulations need to face stiffer consequences. If the easiest way to accomplish this is with more enforcement officers then so be it. They are making the rest of us look bad.

We need to focus on the science and things that we know are true. These are the easy things to accomplish. The science will convince producers it is the right thing to do and at the end of the day we (the general public) will get what we want; healthier lakes and Streams