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(Commission Secretary)

Good Morning

My name is Mary Jane Hiebert President of the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce. The Steinbach Chamber is one of the largest rural Chambers of Commerce in Manitoba. Our 260 members represent all business sectors, including the many sectors of agriculture.

We are here today in support of Manitoba's hog industry and particularly the support of the industry in the southeast.

The importance of the hog industry to southeastern Manitoba cannot be overstated.

- It has contributed to the southeast region of Manitoba being the fastest growing region in Canada.
- The industry and its supporting services has had a major positive impact on many businesses and services. Examples include the southeast being home to a new education complex and a new cancer care facility at Bethesda Hospital. Two services which impact many lives in the community.
- In a time where agriculture is struggling in many other parts of the country we have the enviable position of having a very strong and vibrant agriculture sector in which the many part of the agriculture equation support one another resulting in growth and prosperity for all.
- As an important employer, the hog industry contributes to the low unemployment rates in the region and actively participates in the hiring of local people and new immigrants.
- The spin-off effect as a result of the industry has lead to the growth of livestock transportation, which results in more jobs for local people. The growth of the construction trade in the area resulting increased purchases from local suppliers of construction materials and employment opportunities for youth.
- The economic benefit to rural Manitoba is realized by an increase in the tax base that has resulted in improved drainage, new roads and busy schools.
- Land and environmental stewardship have always been a part of every day practise for the industry. Farm families live on the land where the barns are located and manure is properly managed.

As a representative of Manitoba's business we are confident that research, science and sound business will prevail, allowing the hog industry to continue to be a significant contributor to Manitoba's economy and social well-being.