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(Commission Secretary)

Hello,

My name is Philip Hofer, from the James Valley Hutterian colony of Elie, Manitoba. I'm here to speak on behalf of my family. I have five children; two boys and three girls. I also want to speak on behalf of the other 25 families who also live here at our colony. Our colony is one of the oldest colonies in Manitoba. It was established in 1918, when we moved here from South Dakota. As you may know, we are part of the Christian faith, a church that was founded in the early 16th century during the Reformation. We are generally known as Anabaptists, because we believe in adult baptism.

Our better-known religious cousins are the Amish as well as the Mennonites. The main difference between us and the other Anabaptists is our choice to live in what we call "Gütergemeinschaft" which we understand to mean a full and voluntary Christian community centered on the teachings of Jesus, having all things in common as it states in the book of Acts, chapter two, verse 44: "Now all who believed were together and had all things in common."

Our forefathers had many hardships and struggles moving from South Dakota to Manitoba. Winters were very harsh and cold which made it especially hard on their livestock, their horses, cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry. They soon realized that their animals needed to be sheltered against the harsh climate. In 1930 sows only farrowed once a year and chickens only laid seasonally, which made eggs and pork a special commodity. Hutterites made improvements and by 1940, chickens started laying almost year-round and pigs farrowed both in early spring and late fall.

We see ourselves as a part of Manitoba's progressive and hardworking country people, trying to make our living in agriculture. For example in our dairy, we have been doing selective breeding of purebred Holsteins for the past 42 years and have managed to become one of the highest producing herds in Manitoba, with good environmental practices.

Here at James Valley, as in most colonies in Manitoba, we rely a great deal on the income from our hog farm. We have a 620 sow, farrow-to-finish high health nucleus where we produce female offspring and implement a high biosecurity program, as well as CQA and TQA validation programs.

We have learned over the years that it is very important to be good stewards of the land, that we keep our drinking water and environment clean and healthy so that we can pass on our community way of life to many more generations.

Thank you.

Philip Hofer
J.V.C.