

From: Fred Horbaty [fred_horbaty@shaw.ca]

Sent: Friday, May 04, 2007 7:28 AM

To: Johnson, Cathy (CON)

Subject: Submission to CEC Hearings into the Hog Industry

Hi Cathy – Please accept this email as my submission to the CEC in respect of their review of the hog industry in Manitoba.

My name is Fred Horbaty and I live approximately 2 km's away from where Olywest wants to build a hog slaughterhouse and rendering facility. My wife and I are very concerned for the well being of our family as well as the well being of the entire city of Winnipeg should this hog plant be built. While I recognize that the hog plant proposal and the expansion of the hog industry are distinct issues being addressed separately by the CEC, the two issues are very much intertwined. That being said, I don't think the CEC's current mandate in reviewing the hog industry will have much of an appetite for hearing my family's concerns regarding Olywest so I will instead focus on the expansion of the hog industry in Manitoba and what I feel will be the effects on all of us.

I was raised on a mixed farm operation just north of Selkirk, MB so I have a fair bit of first hand knowledge of what it means to be a farmer. I find it very interesting how the Manitoba Pork Council refers to its producers as "hog farmers" in its media campaigns – tag lines like "Manitoba hog farmers have created over 15,000 jobs ..." or "Manitoba hog farmers have added over \$1 billion to our provincial economy..." or even "Manitoba hog farmers have invested over \$20 million into environmental research...". The fact is that the overwhelming majority of hogs produced in this province are not raised by what I would consider to be traditional "farmers", but rather by "managers" and their employees who are paid a salary and work on a hog operation owned by one of the big corporations that control the hog industry on the prairies (ie. Big Sky, Maple Leaf, Hytek, etc). It is true that many hog operations were started by the traditional farmer, but vertical integration by the hog industry has resulted in the large majority of smaller farmers becoming employees for big corporations. This is evident from the Manitoba Pork Council's own presentation – on its slide entitled "Manitoba Pig Farms by Herd Size, 1976-2006E", it clearly shows that the number of hog operations has decreased from around 6,000 in the mid-70's to less than 1,500 in 2006. During this same time, hog production went from under 2 million head to over 8 million. The hog industry is portraying this halt on the expansion of the industry as hurting farmers, which I don't think that is fair or accurate. Farmers are becoming a rarity in this industry. What the CEC review is doing is making it inconvenient for the big hog corporations to continue to expand at the exponential rate they have been over the past few years. Portraying the industry as "hog farmers" is simply a marketing strategy meant to make the general public sympathetic to the "plight of the farmer" and how the government is interfering with the small farmer raising their family in rural Manitoba. Nice spin by the industry, but not very accurate.

That being said, I think the biggest concern that all Manitobans should be looking at is the environmental impact of the rapid expansion of the industry and the planned growth of the feeder industry if additional slaughter capacity is made a reality as planned. Nearly ½ of all pigs produced in Manitoba are shipped outside of the province at less than market weight for finishing. Since these animals are shipped before becoming market weight, they produce much less manure during their time in the province as compared to a hog raised for slaughter in the province. The industry states very clearly that they want to increase slaughter capacity to over 9 million hogs per year (an increase of over 100% from the slaughter levels in 2005) and finish more of the existing weanling crop – if this happens, there will be an enormous increase in the amount of manure produced. This will happen even if the industry does not increase overall hog production. But their plan is to increase hog production as well. Increased hog production + increased

finishing = exponential increase in manure and manure is one of the most significant environmental hazards Manitoba is going to have to deal with if the industry continues to expand at its historical pace. Nitrogen, phosphorus, methane and nitrous oxide levels, ground water quality, the quality of our lakes and streams and air quality will all be impacted if there is more manure to deal with. The environmental warnings are all around us – Lake Winnipeg is reportedly in very rough shape, we are being asked to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions on a daily basis by adopting technologies such as hybrid cars, fluorescent light bulbs and geothermal heating. At the same time, we are looking to expand an industry that will increase pollution and increase greenhouse gas emissions. It does not seem to me that we are making any headway into protecting our environment if we allow the hog industry to continue to expand at its rapid pace.

I am very glad that the CEC is looking into this industry. My hope is that they will look at all of the evidence presented in an objective and reasonable manner and not be shaken by the doomsday predictions from the Manitoba Pork Council that restrictions on the industry will have catastrophic effects on the economy, nor their banter on how this will hurt “hog farmers”. Their mandate is to evaluate the environmental sustainability of the industry, not the economic. I hope that I am not being naïve in having faith that they will abide by their mandate and make a decision that is in the best interest of our environment.

If you have any questions, you can reach me via email or via phone.

Best regards,
Fred Horbaty

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