

June 13, 2011

Presentation to the Standing Committee of the Manitoba Legislature on the

Save Lake Winnipeg Act – Bill 46

I am submitting this presentation on Bill 46 as a private citizen, an advocate for Lake Winnipeg and an advocate for animal welfare. I commend the government on bringing forward legislation aimed at restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg. As the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world and Canada's 6th Great Lake, Lake Winnipeg holds tremendous value not only to Manitobans but as an iconic symbol of Canadian lakes. Although the Lake Winnipeg watershed spans 4 provinces and 4 states, we Manitobans must take the lead on the many actions required to restore the health of the lake. It is clear that it will be much easier for us to persuade the many other, more far reaching constituents in the lake's watershed, to "do the right thing" once we have demonstrated that we are doing it, not just talking about it.

I will be commenting on 3 sections of Bill 46, the section pertaining to the hog industry, the section pertaining to wetlands, and the section pertaining to municipal wastewater treatment.

Part Two – Environment Act

I support the proposed moratorium on new development in the hog industry but that alone will not make a difference. The excess phosphorus and nitrogen that are getting into the waterways will continue to do so unless we shift the animal housing and production methods in the hog industry. As an animal welfare advocate I have long been calling for major changes in our industrial practices in Manitoba. I believe that it is inhumane and unnecessary to keep our sows so confined that they can only take a step forward or backward, living in such a confined space for their entire adult life, that they cannot even turn around. We know that alternative housing systems are currently being used in Manitoba. There should be no excuse for continuing these intensive confinement practices. If economics are the reason, then I urge hog producers and farmers to start charging a fair price for the pigs, so that they can do it "right" without losing money.

The types of housing systems we use for the pigs are the basis of many of the environmental concerns. To be specific, when we increase the intensity of production by housing pigs in great numbers in confined spaces without using any type of straw bedding, there are vast quantities of liquid manure that must be dealt with.

For some years now, I have been trying to draw the attention of industry and government leaders to the following international scientific reports which are all calling

for major changes in the world's industrial agriculture practices because there is wide recognition that they are not sustainable:

- **The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production 2008**
A Project of the Pew Charitable Trusts and John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Excerpt from the Executive Summary:

“While increasing the speed of production, the intensive confinement production system creates a number of problems. These include contributing to the increase in the pool of antibiotic-resistant bacteria because of the overuse of antibiotics; air quality problems; the contamination of rivers, streams, and coastal waters with concentrated animal waste; animal welfare problems, mainly as a result of the extremely close quarters in which the animals are housed; and significant shifts in the social structure and economy of many farming regions throughout the country.”

- **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005**
Ecosystems and Human Well-Being Synthesis – A report called for by the United Nations and governed by a multi-stakeholder board including representatives of international institutions, governments, business, NGOs and indigenous peoples.

“The use of two ecosystem services - capture fisheries and fresh water – is now well beyond levels that can be sustained even at current demands, much less future ones.”

- **IAASTD – International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge Science and Technology for Development 2008**– compiled by scientists from 61 countries
- **Eating Our Future – The Environmental Impact of Industrial Animal Agriculture 2008** – author, Dr. Michael C. Appleby for the World Society for the Protection of Animals

“For livestock production to have reduced impact on climate change and to be sustainable in other respects it must be biologically based, socially just and humane. Animal welfare must be included in all future discussions on agriculture and climate change.”

- **Livestock's Long Shadow – Environmental Issues and Options 2007**– Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Livestock Environment and Development(LEAD) supported by the World Bank, the EU, the US Agency for International Development and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

“The livestock sector emerges as one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global. The findings of this report suggest that it should be a major policy focus when dealing with problems of land degradation, climate change and air pollution, water shortage and water pollution and loss of biodiversity.”

If we continue to ignore the evidence that is being compiled and promoted by scientists around the world, then I think we are guilty of wilful ignorance and will be responsible for causing immeasurable damage for future generations to deal with.

Further to the international reports calling for significant changes, there are movements around the world to address the practices employed in the intensive confinement systems used in the hog industry. The following is a list of jurisdictions taking action to put an end to these systems:

- 2009 - **Michigan** – bans intensive confinement systems including sow stalls, veal crates and battery cages for laying hens.
- 2008 - **California** – banning of intensive confinement systems in animal agriculture including gestation stalls in the hog industry, battery cages for laying hens and veal crates. 6 years to phase out gestation stalls
- 2008 - **Colorado** – 150,000 sows – 10 year phase out for sow stalls – 4 year phase out for veal crates
- 2007 - **Oregon** – 6 year phase out for sow stalls
- 2006 - **Arizona** – 6 year phase out of gestation stalls and veal crates by 2012
- 2002 - **Florida** – phase out of gestation stalls

- 2013 - **European Union** – all 27 countries - phase out of sow stalls

- 2007 - **Smithfield Foods, Maple Leaf and Cargill** announce 10 year phase out of gestation stalls by 2017

- 2010 – **Tasmania, Australia** – ban on sow stalls

- **Safeway, Burger King , McDonalds** all announce initiatives to buy more pork from non-gestation stall farms in the USA

To conclude this section of my presentation, I suggest that we are doing our hog producers in Manitoba no favours by not pressing them to change their practices sooner rather than later. Gradually people around the world are saying “no” to pork coming from

pigs raised in intensive confinement. There is no reason to believe that those sentiments will not eventually affect much of the market for Manitoba's pork.

Part One – The Crown Lands Act

I support preservation of wetlands on crown lands but urge much more significant measures to be developed to preserve and restore wetlands across much of our landscape. We know that we have drained 70% of wetlands across the Prairies over the last century. To put this in language that everyone can understand, that is like humans losing 70% of their kidney function. Wetlands are nature's kidneys, filtering much of the excess phosphorus and nitrogen from the water before it hits the streams and rivers that carry it up to the lake. The plant life that grows in wetlands sucks up the nutrients that we don't want getting into our waters and in some circumstances those plants can be harvested in order to retain the phosphorus for other uses.

The other key function of wetlands is to act like sponges in times of too much water. They hold the water and release it much more slowly over a period of time. If we consider the devastation of this year's flooding across much of southern Manitoba and the costs likely in the \$2 million range for compensation for flood damage, it would seem a wise investment to start to put some money into prevention by developing very significant programs to pay landowners to leave wetlands in place.

Part Five – The Water Protection Act

I support the government's action to require the city of Winnipeg to upgrade our wastewater treatment systems to use biological nutrient removal to remove the phosphorus and nitrogen. It is my understanding that all the other major cities in the Lake Winnipeg watershed have instituted this type of system.

I have become aware of a Vancouver based company, Ostara Technologies, that is now operating in several cities around the world to remove the phosphorus from the wastewater and is reconstituting it into a pelletized fertilizer product. Therefore this technology allows municipal wastewater treatment systems to start to generate some income for their cities to help offset some of the costs. I hope that the city of Winnipeg will consider this as we now understand that phosphorus is a valuable and finite resource.

Finally, I would point out that often over the past 3 years when I've been giving presentations around Manitoba about the deteriorating state of Lake Winnipeg and other Manitoba lakes, I have been asked why the city of Winnipeg is allowed to continue being such a major contributor to the excess nutrient problem of Lake Winnipeg. I do not have a good answer to this question and frankly I'm quite embarrassed to be a citizen of Winnipeg and know that there is so much more we could be doing towards solving this problem.

We all need to be part of the solution to restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg. It is going to cost everyone money in a variety of ways. Let us get going now to take the actions required. If we don't, the financial and environmental costs are just going to keep rising.

Respectfully Submitted By:

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