

Keystone Agricultural Producers



Bill 17
The Environment
Amendment Act
(Permanent Ban on Building or
Expanding Hog Facilities)

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The Voice of Manitoba Farmers

On behalf of Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), I am pleased to share our organization's position with respect to Bill 17 – The Environment Amendment Act (Permanent Ban on Building or Expanding Hog Facilities). KAP is a democratically controlled general farm policy organization representing and promoting the interest of thousands of agricultural producers in Manitoba. Our membership consists of farmers and commodity groups throughout the province, and our organization is proud to be the voice of Manitoba farmers.

Bill 17 prohibits the construction or expansion of confined livestock areas for pigs and pig manure storage facilities in specified areas of Manitoba. This bill followed the release of the Clean Environment Commission report on the sustainability of the hog industry and that report did NOT call for a ban on hog facilities. The provincial government went beyond the CEC recommendations by announcing an indefinite moratorium on any new or expanding hog operations which includes an area that extends from the Interlake to the U.S. border – a huge stretch of agro-Manitoba.

This piece of legislation is NOT based on science but rather on the political whim of government without due consideration for the economic impact on rural Manitoba and on the province as a whole. The government has eliminated any opportunity for beginning or existing hog farmers across the entire middle swath of Manitoba, without any regard for their ability to raise hogs in a way that is environmentally sustainable.

KAP believes that placing a ban on the hog sector is wrong and not based on any sound science. Has the government given consideration to the number of potential job losses that this will create? Has the government considered the financial burden it is placing on the farm families directly affected by the ban?

Currently, there are several regulations in place which govern sustainable production, including the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management and the Nutrient Management Regulations. KAP and its commodity group members worked in consultation with government in both of these areas to develop a workable approach that protects the environment and ensures the sustainability of our industry and the provincial economy.

The new Nutrient Management Regulation is site-specific and is based on science like soil testing. If government truly wants to address some environmental issues and see real results, then we believe working through a science-based model like this regulation is the best approach. The important thing to note by way of this example is that the tools are in place and farmers are already moving forward to address issues like phosphorus concentration. There is no need to place a ban on a huge area of our province. It does not make good business sense, and the environmental impact is questionable.

Water quality problems associated with Lake Winnipeg have occurred over many years and from many sources. If government does not believe that their current regulatory processes are adequate, then we believe it would be more appropriate for them to assess their own effectiveness in this area, identify any gaps, and continue to work with all sectors including agriculture to develop an appropriate approach.

All sectors of the agriculture industry have shown leadership in the area of environmental stewardship, and Manitoba's farmers take their role as stewards of the land very seriously. They have voluntarily adopted Environmental Farm Plans at an impressive rate, invested in environmental research and on-farm technologies, complied with regulations, and managed nutrients effectively. This has been well-documented by our farmers, by our commodity organizations, by the academic community, and even by governments. But our commitment does not stop at the farm gate. As an example, the hog industry has invested significant amounts of money and time into research that deals with a host of environmental initiatives designed to minimize their impact on the environment, but this moratorium fails to take it into consideration.

Government has the responsibility to ensure resources are available for research and development on a long term sustainable time period. Over the years, government has not properly funded or ensured that the proper research was in place. The CEC report recommends a

strengthening of the research and government must ensure that this takes place.

We must also consider the importance of the hog industry to Manitoba and our agricultural sector. Historically, one of the reasons that the livestock industry was expanded was to replace the need for commercial fertilizers. While we have moved in that direction, Manitoba's farmers are still importing nutrients. Most soils are deficient in nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus and we need to add these nutrients to grow our crops. It is science and facts like these that we believe government must use as a basis for decision-making, instead of political decisions made for political purposes through moratoriums. Through research and development, science based decisions can be made. Many new technologies are in development that would allow sustainable development without prohibitive legislation.

Our message to this committee is simple: Farmers have done their part to protect the environment, and we'll continue to do our best to improve the sustainability of our industry. We need a mix of good regulation, effective incentives, research, and resources for this to be possible, and farmers want government to be a partner. There are ways that we can grow a better environment for Manitobans, but an outright moratorium on one part of agriculture is NOT the way to do it. Keystone Agricultural Producers is calling on you today to withdraw Bill 17 or at the very least make serious and significant amendments to Bill 17 in consultation with hog farmers and the agricultural

industry. Government and industry need to work together co-operatively to ensure a strong and healthy industry today and into the future. Our next generation depends on it.

Thank you.