

Saving Lake Winnipeg

– An Open Letter from Concerned Farmers

To the Citizens of Manitoba,

Did you know the provincial government recently passed legislation banning all new hog barns and expansions in every corner of Manitoba, no matter how small the farm? The government claims this was undertaken to prevent hog manure and phosphorus from getting into Lake Winnipeg - despite the fact that no appreciable amount of phosphorus from hog manure gets in the lake in the first place, and despite the fact that **hog farmers must already meet more environmental standards than any other farmers in Canada.**

They have made many changes to their practices that have greatly reduced the amount of phosphorus that enters the Lake Winnipeg watershed. This simplistic ban will accomplish nothing, except to harm all hog farmers, who are important contributors to Manitoba agriculture, its society and the economy.

As farmers, we care deeply about the land. Good clean water is vital to our farms and to the health of our families. We have managed most of the arable landscape in Manitoba for generations, and **we are the original environmentalists.**

As farmers and the people who represent the major farm organizations in the province, we believe banning or severely restricting one sector of society is the wrong approach to solve the problems of the lake. Our families use the beaches of Lake Winnipeg too, and we want to do our part to help the lake. This kind of approach is not the way to do it.

The causes of algae blooms in Lake Winnipeg are varied and not well understood. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board laid out these complexities in its report to the provincial government in 2006.

Because **more than half the phosphorus enters the watershed outside the province**, and a significant portion moves naturally off the landscape along with spring run-off, we need to look at a comprehensive solution that involves all stakeholders and addresses the interconnected challenges that face the lake. An effective plan will have to deal with Manitoba's many water management issues, but it cannot inappropriately restrict farmers' ability to grow food.

We need more research to understand and deal with issues of algae blooms in Lake Winnipeg. We also need a co-operative and consultative approach with all stakeholders to fix problems, not a heavy-handed, misplaced regulatory approach. Manitoba farmers can be, and want to be, a part of the solution. We do not deserve most of the blame.

We employ the very best in practices and technology to produce a huge range of high quality food for Manitobans and for markets around the world. **We are proud of what we do.**

Rather than holding one small group responsible for the algae in Lake Winnipeg, let all Manitobans work co-operatively together to find real solutions, improve our environment and make our province a better place in which to live, work and play.

We ask all Manitobans to support us in urging the government to work co-operatively to solve Lake Winnipeg's problems, not impose unreasonable regulations.

Doug Chorney, *President*
Keystone Agricultural Producers

Hank Enns, *President*
Manitoba Corn Growers Association

Chad Berry, *Chairman*
Keystone Potato Producers

Karl Kynoch, *Chairman*
Manitoba Pork Council

Marcel Gousseau, *President*
Manitoba Forage Seed Association

Kelly Dobson, *President*
National Sunflower Association of Canada

Major Jay Fox, *President*
Manitoba Beef Producers

David Wiens, *Chair*
Dairy Farmers of Manitoba

Andrew Saramaga, *President*
Manitoba Pulse Growers Association

Bill Uruski, *Chairman*
Manitoba Turkey Producers

Jim Lintott, *Chair*
Manitoba Forage Council

Rob Pettinger, *President*
Manitoba Canola Growers Association

Jake Wiebe, *Chair*
Manitoba Chicken Producers

Todd Giffin, *President*
Vegetable Growers' Association of Manitoba

Craig Riddell, *President*
Manitoba Seed Growers Association

The Facts on Phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg

- Though fingers point at pork producers, all of agriculture in this province contributes only 15% of the phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg. In fact, the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board created the following list of phosphorus contributors:
- 53% outside sources (32% USA)
- 17% natural and undefined sources (eg. septic fields)
- 15% agriculture (of which hogs are a small percentage)
- 9% municipal/Winnipeg wastewater
- 6% atmospheric

Source: Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board December 2006 report Reducing Nutrient Loading to Lake Winnipeg and its Watershed

Nutrients

- Most soils in Manitoba need to have phosphorus in fertilizers added to ensure healthy crop growth.
- Fertilizer (including manure) is applied at a scientifically-set rate to match crop use of the nutrients.
- Hog and other livestock farmers have to fill out government-approved, annual manure management plans.
- Livestock eat grains mostly produced here, and the manure from these animals is applied to the soil as fertilizer to promote the growth of crops, that are again fed back to the animals. The crops use up most of the nutrients, leaving little to run off. This is known as the Nutrient Cycle. This is the way we have produced crops and livestock for thousands of years. It is a harmonious balance between the need for food and the protection of the environment.

Farming in Manitoba by the Numbers

- There are approximately 19,000 farms in Manitoba.
- Agriculture in Manitoba has about \$4.1 billion in gross receipts.
- Agriculture directly employs 30,000 people in Manitoba, with indirect employment totalling 62,000 people in Manitoba.

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