

“No” to Hog mega-barn expansion “Yes” to health, environment and rural life

If Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Clay Serby's dream of hog barn expansion comes true, pigs will out-number people in Saskatchewan by 10 to 1. Government keeps investing in the expansion of intensive hog industry in spite of the facts that

- **Hog mega-barns are bad for the health**
- **Hog mega-barns pollute the air, water and soil**
- **Hog mega-barns undermine rural communities**
- **The government is in a serious conflict of interest!**

The **Romanow Commission** points out that people living in rural areas need to be supported in bringing their health status and access to health services up to the level that urban Canadians enjoy. See < http://www.healthcarecommission.ca/pdf/HCC_Chapter_7.pdf>

The Saskatchewan government supports the Romanow recommendations, but apparently is willing to let the agri-business agenda undermine the health of rural residents!

- The fumes from hog mega barns contain ammonia and highly toxic hydrogen sulphide. **70% of hog barn workers have symptoms of respiratory illness.** (American Lung Association)
- **A woman was almost killed by manure gas** while cleaning a hog barn toilet near Kipling, Sask., on Feb. 10, 2001.
- **Misuse of antibiotics is leading to bacterial resistance to the drugs.** Antibiotic use in animals is 100 to 1,000 times the use in for humans and 90% used on agricultural animals are not used to control infectious disease, but to promote growth and as prophylactic agents.

At their May 2001 Annual Meeting, the **Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association** passed a resolution calling for policy action concerning quality of life of individuals in regard to air quality, safe water and safe food production.

- A study in Illinois in 2001 found **tetracycline resistance genes in soil and groundwater bacteria** downstream from two swine facilities that use antibiotics as growth promoters. The genes are transferred to this type of bacteria, where they can survive and travel long distances in the environment. Once **resistance genes make their way into drinking water**, they will find their way into the guts of the people, animals and wildlife that drink it.



135th Annual Meeting of the **Canadian Medical Association** Saint John, New Brunswick, August 2002, adopted the following resolutions:

1. That CMA express its concern with regard to the **risk to public health in rural areas** that is presented by the development of industrial hog farms.
2. That CMA ask federal, provincial and territorial governments for a **moratorium on the expansion of the hog industry** until scientific data on the attendant health risks are known.
3. That CMA urge the federal, provincial and territorial governments to initiate and **support research into contaminants** associated with industrial hog farms.

Each 5,000 sow hog operation produces about 120,000 market hogs per year on six sites. The untreated manure is spread on the ground within 2 miles of the manure pits in the spring before seeding, or in the fall after harvest. This year many fields were frozen by the time harvest was done. Spreading manure on frozen ground is a very high risk for water contamination during spring run-off.

Saskatchewan also supports the **Kyoto protocol's** goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

How are Kyoto targets going to be reached with the government investing in the expansion of hog mega barns when the **liquid manure system used in intensive hog production emits large amounts of methane and nitrous oxide?**

- **Methane has 21 times** the global warming potential of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)
- **1 kg of Nitrous oxide is equivalent to 310 kgs of CO₂.**
- In addition, there are the CO₂ emissions due to **heating, cooling and ventilating** the large barns, in the **production of "cheap" feed grains** by chemical-intensive methods, as well as from the emissions due to **refrigeration** and **transportation** required to get the pork to distant export markets.

According to an Agriculture Canada study, **manure is the largest single source** of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in hog production, and it is **highest in liquid manure systems**, when stored and when applied to fields in the fall or winter where it decomposes anaerobically while underwater either on the field or after running off into a slough.

If Saskatchewan is serious about health and the environment we will **stop putting public money into expanding intensive industrial hog production** and start promoting other alternatives for the rural economy.

The **Government of Saskatchewan** supports the hog industry by **investing** in Big Sky Farms Inc which is the 8th largest hog producer in Canada; by **providing loans** to prop up the industry when the prices fall (due to over-production); by **subsidizing** barn construction with a PST tax holiday; by having the **Department of Agriculture "fox"** regulate and promote the **hog industry "henhouse"!**

Hog mega barn expansion is supposed to create jobs and prosperity in rural communities. The reality is the big ILOs are **putting smaller hog producers out of business**, lowering rural **property values**, creating a **bad environment** for other types of businesses, and creating **low-paying and unhealthy jobs** with such "recruitment and retention" problems that the Province is preparing the way for Mexican immigrant workers to fill the gap.

There are alternatives!!

We have a vision of livestock production for health and social justice.

We promote livestock production that supports food sovereignty, ecological, human and animal health as well as local sustainability and community viability and informed citizen/consumer choice.

We are against:

- Contamination and depletion of surface and ground waters
- Industry practices that lead to human health problems such as allergies, asthma, stress, antibiotic resistance, pathogens in soil and water, etc.;
- Negative effects of intensive hog industry on social, economic, and cultural fabric of Saskatchewan communities.
- Government money and tax breaks for packers and mega-barns

We are in favour of:

- Future access to adequate supplies of clean water by local people;
- Workers' rights including coverage under Occupational Health and Safety Legislation, and Workers Compensation Legislation;
- Humane conditions for pigs in barns and assembly areas of packing plants;
- Single desk selling of hogs, price transparency and limits to vertical integration of the pork industry;
- Clear definition of liability in hog industry related issues such as water contamination



SASKATOON / PARKLANDS GROUP

For more information call (306) 652-3900
or email: dmet@sasktel.net

(Winter 2003)