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After reading the feedback our barn proposal has caused I'm not really sure what to say. Most of what I'm hearing locally is positive stuff. Most people are very pleased to see any form of business in the area to help revitalize the strong agriculture backbone that once started these small towns. This barn is not a large company barn as some people call it. It's proposed and will be owned by a small family farm that has the roots of many generations planted deep in the soil. As I wrote in the article that I paid to submit to the Morden Winkler Voice, and will attach, this barn will be a positive bonus to the surrounding area. The largest concern that local people out here have is that their small town will soon be a ghost town full of dead businesses and no one seems to know how to revitalize it. Then when a new business tries to be born or grow there are always a few who want to stop it. I could use the Swan Lake Autobody as an example. It ended up in Treherne. I do acknowledge the main concern that locals always have. Smell. Luckily new practices in manure application have had a positive effect on that. Injecting the manure below the surface is the new norm and doing it at the right time of year helps too. As for property value, I'm quite certain a few extra million getting spent locally in the near future and many years after in the form of taxes and employee presence will help keep local services alive. Those services such as schools, hospitals, stores of all sorts, etc. will only have a positive impact on local property value. The other concern is that the pigs are born raised and killed solely for human consumption. That is true. I can't change that. One sad fact about humans is that we have no problem making lunch out of our fellow species on this planet. Sorry. But I'm not the only one to blame. Good luck convincing the whole planet to change their ways. This animals will be raised somewhere if not here, and then our government will spend the money to get it here. I'd rather just keep the money in our area. As for other concerns such as environment please read my article. Thank you.

LARGE SCALE HOG BARN WILL HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

I was dismayed to read a recent article written by someone who lives 100 miles away judging the practices of the modern farmer. This someone pretends to be knowledgeable because a relative lived on a farm years back. Well a lot has changed. I live on a farm 1/4 mile from where I grew up. My father's house is on the same section, and my son lives in it now. My first cousin works the land across the road that he acquired from my uncle who lives 1 1/2 miles away in the house that my grandfather built. I farm with two sons right now, and we work closely with a young neighbour who is trying his best to make a living on his father's land. Land around here rents out for \$150 or so per acre and commonly sells for around \$1,000,000 a quarter. The last one I bought was just shy of that. I know it doesn't pencil out, but it's the first thing I see out my window each morning. I had to try. A lot of things on the farm today don't pencil out. In fact most of us would be far smarter to cash it all in and move to the city, but we don't because it's in our blood. It's where we grew up and we can't imagine anything else so for someone to imply that I'm not being considerate to my water, my soil, my local wildlife, my environment or my neighbours is truly an insult born of ignorance. Maybe I can help educate her a bit.

Let's start with the process we are going through to acquire government approval to build a barn. It's called a technical review. It's a long process developed by the government to ensure that new barns are built in a very responsible manner in regards to the surrounding area. The first part is called a site assessment. I worked on this alone for about 2 months, but it asked for so much information about my farm and surrounding area that after much frustration and slow progress I decided to get the help of a consultant. Two in fact, and they don't work for free. Together we finally got it done. They really know what they're doing. We submitted it about 3 1/2 months after I first started. I believe it's just over 80 pages and includes much information off the internet that I would have never found, many charts and calculators that help figure out the manure management, and many satellite photos with information about topography and soil types and drainage. It describes every hill, ditch, creek, waterway, pothole, animal habitat, and well just about anything else there is to know about my farm and many miles around. I needed to provide soil samples and my crop history so we can now determine how much Nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, and boron (these are types of fertilizer for those of you that might not know) is in my soil, how much my crops have required over the years, and how

much they will require in the future. The government is very strict about the barn size and how many acres of crop, and which varieties of crop will be required to consume the fertilizer that the barn will produce. For the record I have 111 acres more than is required and its all within 1 1/2 miles of the barn so you won't see any large manure trucks from here destroying the roads. The manure will be pumped from the lagoon directly to the applicator and tested constantly for fertilizer content. This information goes directly to the applicator and based on my soil samples the application rate is automatically adjusted to ensure that just the right amount is applied for my yield target. I'm required to soil sample all my fields each year and submit the results to ensure over applying does not take place. If for some reason I would ever have more than enough of this product, I would have many neighbours more than happy to take it. Every farmer knows that manure produces higher yields than other forms of fertilizer. And its NATURAL! NATURAL! Don't we all love that word?

I'm told that the process used to produce commercial fertilizers is hard on the atmosphere, and the trucks that haul them around are a hazard to our environment. Because of this barn I will be purchasing far less commercial phosphorus and nitrogen, something like 65,000 lbs. less phosphorus and 30,000 gallons less nitrogen. This translates to about 8 semi loads that won't be coming to my farm. That's better for everyone and better for these already destroyed highways. Anyone worried about the safety of my lagoon should consider all those big shiny tanks all over the country that hold commercial fertilizer, and yes those tanks are necessary to grow the food that feeds the world. Without fertilizer the globe would already be starving. And did I mention the manure is NATURAL! Furthermore I'm required to keep a test well near the lagoon just for the purpose of monitoring the ground water in the unlikely case that the lagoon should leak.

The lagoon itself is not just a hole in the ground. The topsoil is put aside and the soil below that is used to build a berm around, all the while being compacted and tested for such to meet strict standards to ensure the absence of air pockets. When complete, the inside of the lagoon must be of a certain soil at a certain thickness and compacted to a strict standard. In some cases a synthetic liner is required (to the tune of 120,000 and up) to ensure a good seal. Also, did I mention the product will be applied by injection several inches below the surface. This greatly reduces odour and conserves the fertilizer value.

As for the building it will be located

where it exceeds all strict government requirements in terms of distance from roads, waterways, buildings, neighbours etc. The estimated cost of the project will be between 2.5 and 3 million, the majority of which will be spent within 30 miles at local businesses and for local tradesmen. This barn and the crop it will help grow will feed at least 20,000 people each year. I wonder if that lady from Winnipeg feeds anyone. I wonder if she eats porks. Oh, and did I mention that Maple Leaf offers a bonus to all producers who don't use antibiotics. That's the route we will be taking. The barn will have full slatted floors so the hogs will never have to lay in their own waste and so much airflow that they will probably be more comfortable than me in the summer. They will never be in a space smaller than 100 square feet, and they will have all the feed and water they can consume. All the feed that this barn will consume will be made primarily out of wheat, corn, barley and soybeans. This should help encourage higher grain prices. And lets not forget the tax dollars. I'm not sure how much it will be but in an area that has suffered the loss of grain elevators, railways, schools, and destroyed roads, I'm sure a few extra tax dollars are a welcome thing for the R.M. This barn will also employ many people directly and indirectly. The company that injects the manure will receive between 40,000 and 60,000 dollars each year and the feed company will receive at least 1 million. The workers in the barn will be my own children or local people who wish to stay in the country. This barn has already created an income for at least 10 people, and its not even off the drawing board yet.

As for the lady from Winnipeg who seems to think this barn will be an eyesore, perhaps she should look around next time she drives this way. She might see all the empty farmyards, or notice the ones that are no longer there at all. She might see the empty houses in town and the closed schools and the struggling hospitals. Those are the things that hurt my eyes. Maybe she should ask herself why she now lives in Winnipeg.

This barn will help my kids, and my grandkids, and maybe their kids, to survive on the farm and offset the rising land prices and input cost that are now choking all the small farms. Does anyone remember the last time they saw a barn being built? Now ask yourself how many barns in your area are empty or torn down. If you think those empty barns are good for your small town, think again.

V.C. Hog Ltd.
Dale VanCauwenberghe
Swan Lake Farmer

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