

# Rama hog barn protestors bring message to Yorkton

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Y-N Writer

*How many times will our taxes be spent before we say no to Bigsky?* ... sang four protestors who gathered in front of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Minister Clay Serby's office, who was away on holidays.

However, the song's words weren't agreed to by all.

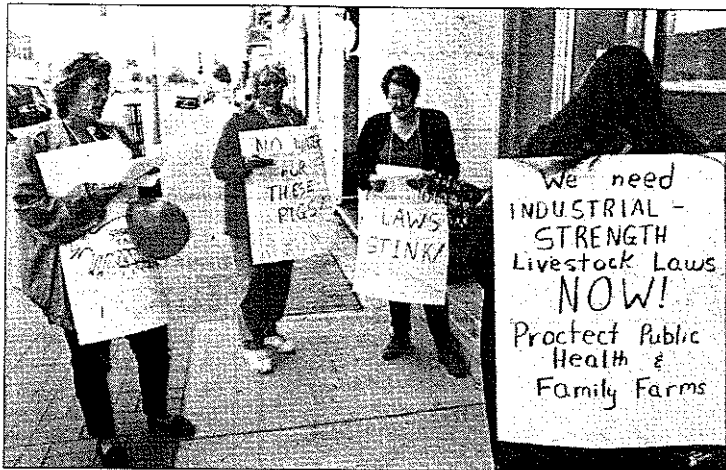
"In my opinion it's a good idea," said Alex Onda, an Esterhazy resident who stopped to inquire what the placards were all about Thursday morning.

"I wish they would come down to Esterhazy and build a hog barn, then farmers could sell their grain locally," he said, admitting he didn't know exactly how much grain hog barns use.

Retired for nearly fifteen years from farming, he pointedly said if Saskatchewan doesn't start producing something other than grain in the province it will go down the tubes, something he says is already happening with many farmers.

"Price of machinery, price of fertilizer, price of chemical ... it's impossible, so we've got to put it through livestock. Why ship it to Alberta when you can use it here and make a buck?"

Of the smell, he says it wouldn't hurt him at all and he wouldn't mind a barn a couple of miles from his farm. "Sewage lagoons will smell more than the pigs," he said. "I used to raise sheep, and people would say they could smell them. Well, it all smells like money. When I took that cheque to the bank the banker never even smell it, he just took it ... the money never smells."



Isabel Muzichuk, third from left, says members of her hog watch group intend to step up efforts, possibly band together with other hog watch groups, to fight the infiltration of mega hog barns in the province.

His thoughts were just one of possibly many who remain silent in their support of the 10,000 unit hog barns to soon be completed in the Rama area.

His statements were contrary to what the four protestors had to say.

"We just wanted to make a point that we're unhappy about what's going on at Rama," said Isabel Muzichuk, a spokesperson for the group. "Three sites have been bought by Bigsky, and they've been approved."

Muzichuk said the group is now looking for consideration about the potential odor that will be emitted from the barns. "Unless they've put in something new, we know very much that the barns at Preeceville and Sturgis are causing the residents a great deal of concern."

She says the smell from barn near Sturgis can be detected in Preeceville, nine miles away, and when the wind is from the north, they

can smell the Preeceville barn as well.

"I have had reports from Crystal Lake, not all of it, on the north towards the west, that they also smell it, the cabin owners there," she said.

Muzichuk says a man in Kelvington supported the creation of the barns but if he knew what was going to happen he never would have supported them. Muzichuk says, on average, fifteen members regularly turn up at meetings to discuss the hog barns. In all, there are thirty people, who have met to discuss the impact of the barns.

Muzichuk says the government's financial involvement in Bigsky's projects are a mistake.

"With these large mega barns, whether its hogs or cattle, the concentration of the animals is so great. Sure it will create a certain number of jobs, but I think you will have to realize that these will be low paying jobs."

She says it is not worth the

problems the barns will cause. In her worst estimation people will simply have to move away from the area. The smaller hog producers will also be impacted.

"I know a farmer about a hundred miles away from

here he runs a two-hundred hog operation. When he goes to meetings they are telling him that he needs to increase his production or he won't have a quota."

The farmer is considering reducing the number of pigs to forty and selling locally. The situation makes Muzichuk question why smaller grants couldn't be given to a greater number of smaller farmers around the province.

"Once those barns are up it's going to be staffed with very, very few people. Like many organizations do now, people are often working for another person or at least another half person."

Muzichuk says her group intends to step-up their efforts in opposition to the barns, some protests which may end-up in Regina. "I understand that it was done by one group, and all the members of the NDP government weren't informed," said Muzichuk. "There's a very

small concentrated group running the government and the back benchers are just sitting there doing what they are told."

Education is needed by all, according to Muzichuk. She says there is information on the effects of hog barns from all over the world on the internet. She is also cautioning people about eating pork that is mass produced - a process she calls inhumane and produces food of concern to her because of the amount of growth hormones used, containing cortizone, in raising the pigs.

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