

Ag & Business

Committee could set future directions

The province has moved to establish a committee to be the watchdog for a new large-scale swine enterprise in the vicinity of Good Spirit Lake.

The decision comes after pressure came from people concerned over the potential impact of an intensive livestock facility on the long term health of the lake, its river sources and the provincial park.

Some neighbours of the new barn were also opposed for reasons which boil down to the ever prevalent N.I.M.B.Y. factor these days — Not In My Back Yard.

While one can appreciate ecological concerns

In my opinion

surrounding Good Spirit Lake, it's harder to support those wishing to squash the development because they are not enamoured with their new neighbours. Somewhere along the line we have to accept a farmer's right to farm.

One wonders if someone developed an allergy to canola pollen, or wheat chaff dust, if they should have the right to alter the cropping patterns of farmers in the area?

However, the lake is a serious matter. Although it has taken a concerted effort by those concerned with the development, to force the government into a move, the committee has the potential to be a benchmark creation.

Established ahead of the barn's completion, testing of soil and water in the area can be undertaken. Without these benchmark calculations, the true impact of any livestock development would be purely speculative.

With data compiled, a pattern in the future of

Column



Calvin Daniels

whether manure distribution over farmland has an impact of ground water and lake water quality.

Of course the true value of the committee may come if a problem is found. Does the committee have the power to force improvement to operations to correct any problems which do arise? Without such clout the committee becomes a toothless watchdog at best.

Certainly much critical data may be compiled over the ensuing few years that could go far to quelling concerns over intensive livestock operations, or conversely showing that they are a detriment to the ecology.

Agriculture Minister Clay Serby has most certainly set in motion a process that will help mold the future expansion of intensive livestock operations in the province — in particular the swine sector.

Whatever happens, here will no doubt also be viewed by other jurisdictions, also struggling with the pros and cons of such intensive livestock operations.

The future face of livestock development is likely to be a key to the Prairie farm sector, and that development will now go under the microscope of review by this new committee.

It should prove an insightful exercise to say the least.

Calvin Daniels is a reporter with Yorkton This Week & Enterprise.

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