

Bill 53 - Fur Act - Law Amendments Committee Presentation - May 5, 2010

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Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 53. I am a second generation mink rancher who now owns his own farm in Kings County. I grew up on the family farm which was started in the late 60's and that is still in operation today in Digby County. I currently employ 4 people, and since the farm's inception in 2006, has grown to 3000 breeders, enabling me to send 15,000 pelts to market this season. My gross revenue should exceed 1 million dollars this year.

I would like to speak on the bill from a ranchers perspective today. I chose to start my farm in Kings County, an area of agricultural production with growing pockets of urban population who want to live in the country, but not with the occasional smell which goes along with it. It was important to me, in the 21st century, to use the expertise and husbandry technics my father taught me, to produce a high quality, highly sought after product, but it was also important to me to build my ranch with an eye to the future, as state of the art as possible, maximizing comfort for the animals, as well as comfort and a safe workplace for my employees.

My foremost concern, however, was my method of manure and waste management, which will inevitably be what will bring favor with my neighbors. In consultations with engineers, I was able build a system that keeps rainwater from contacting manure, manure from contacting the ground, and my neighbor's fist from contacting my face. This system allows for daily collection and storage of solids and liquids, severely minimizing odor and flies. Fortunately, my mink manure is fought over by a number of crop farmers, who desperately want it for soil enhancement. finding a home for it is not a problem. We are also fortunate to have the

340 co-op to process our skins and deal with the carcasses in such a state of the art fashion.

These types of methods are being repeated on many startup operations throughout the province, for smart operators know that a simple and effective manure management system facilitates further expansion and increased production, without the unwanted environmental impacts.

The new Bill has minimal effects on new ranchers such as myself, for most are already adhering to the highest standards known. It gives me comfort to know everyone without exception must work by these high standards as well.

For those farmers who started their farms 20, 30, or even 40 plus years ago, I have these thoughts. They built their farms from literally a dozen mink to thousands and did it the best they knew how. They are the backbone of the industry, and have built it proudly to the 100 million dollar we are now at. Since the development of a more environmentally conscious culture, society has become increasingly aware of how we all can do things better. The mink rancher is no different, and most have invested significantly into more modern systems. This has largely been due to the desire to be good stewards, and participation in the farm investment fund, encouraging environmental and water quality improvements on a cost share basis. Farmers have invested millions over the years in environmental improvements and the farm investment fund continues to be an important part of that success. The existing ranches in operation today will continue to build on this momentum, and they have 5 to 6 years to bring their operations up to acceptable standards. This will not be completely painless for them, but I believe the timeline is reasonable, and I am confident they are up to the task. I believe it was important that this bill also gave the government the ability to provide programs to assist in the sustainable development and growth of the industry.

Are there farmers who have a hard time seeing the forest for the trees concerning this legislation? Sure. Does it make some nervous? Sure. I believe though, this legislation provides for the long term sustainability, and successful development and expansion of our industry. However, we all

know that the meat of this act will come with the development of the standards and regulations. If these regulations are built on science and not emotion, if they are free from the extreme and full of the common sense, and we are given the respect that every other agricultural sector demands, then I as a rancher, feel that we have nothing to fear from this bill. We and our families are proud of what we do, and what we contribute to our province, and I believe this bill will help Nova Scotians feel the same way.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Mullen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Thank You," text.

Dan Mullen