

## PVWC Hearing

Good morning Commission Members, Proponents, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am Marvin Hovorka, Reeve of the R.M. of Piney. (And introduce members of Council present).

One of the presenters in favour of this proposal has stated “As leaders of our municipalities, we have a responsibility and obligation to our ratepayers to provide them with clean drinking water.....” We too have the same responsibilities.

The R.M. of Piney is in the extreme South East portion of the Province of Manitoba and is made up of 912 square miles of forest and Crown land, agricultural land, wetlands, the Sundown, Carrick , Piney, Sprague and St.Labre Bogs, Spurwoods Wildlife Management Area, Cathills Provincial Forest, Wampum Provincial Forest, North West Angle Provincial Forest, Sandilands Provincial Forest, The Whitemouth Lake Island Ecological Reserve, Watson P. Davidson Wildlife Management Area. Out of the 912 square miles in The R.M. of Piney only 24% is privately owned, 6% is municipal and the balance of 70% is Provincial Crown Lands.

The Municipality is an area of forest, small lakes and ponds, streams, springs, pockets of agricultural lands, and is part of the boreal forest. The historical significance of the area is built around forestry agriculture and wildlife.

The R.M. of Piney is in the process of creating a Development Plan and subsequent zoning. The development of the municipal plan includes the designation of Water Quality Management Zones. The Municipality has concerns

due to the diverse ecosystem of our area. We have expressed our concerns to the Water Stewardship Department since its creation with Mr. Ashton as Minister. Our request for a comprehensive study including the mapping and designation of sensitivity zones, aquifers and their capabilities, was received with enthusiasm and a promise to complete within 3-6 months. Three years have passed to no avail.

The R.M. of Piney being a major source of water resources has two (2) water plants operating successfully and a third pending. The 1700 Residents of The R.M. of Piney are concerned about the domestic water quality, supply, and the possible impact due to intensive livestock development, the sale and processing of water, and increased demand for water by other communities and organizations such as P.V.W.C.

Our residents presently enjoy some of the best drinking water in the world. There are no water treatment plants or other water related infrastructure present. In fact, the only source of potable water for our residents comes from landowners private wells. There are no other alternatives, and up until now, there has been no need to consider alternative sources. The population certainly could not financially afford the infrastructure costs of a complicated alternative fresh water system.

Because the recharge capacity of the Sandilands Aquifer is unknown by the proponents or by the Province of Manitoba, we believe that the PVWC proposal threatens the water quantity, and thus, the way of life of our residents. We know that the Province has already granted at least 3 water rights licenses to the 3 bottling plants located in the R.M. We also know of numerous licenses granted to

a number of livestock operations located within our boundaries, yet no one seems to know how much water is available for the taking.

With all the scientific studies and research that has supposedly been conducted, no one from PVWC or the Province of Manitoba is willing to guarantee that local wells in The R.M. of Piney will not be adversely affected by this project. Other concerns have come up regarding natural wetlands and ecosystems. Who is willing to guarantee that these won't be negatively affected? It is not acceptable to push this proposal through and worry about the implications later on. Self monitoring is not acceptable.

It was also mentioned by another presenter that, "If this project goes forward, it sets a precedent that water is available for the taking." I ask the question, who will be asking for the water next? How much will they want? Will it be another guess as to how much the aquifer can sustain?

Dr. Brooks mentioned water management needs to be a public policy decision not a political decision, and water has a value that belongs to the public not to the person that pumps it out. Conservation practices are not in the best financial interest of PVWC especially with a substantial return on the investment. We would like to ask who stands to gain the most from this proposal, the Public or the Cooperative.

PVWC states that an interrupted three day testing period is sufficient enough to predict the draw down of the water in the area. We are also told that the cone extended to the wetlands on the Bedford Ridge. What will happen if the extraction

goes at 50L/sec, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? PVWC says there is “enough info now to make a decision, and that the research will be done later-hopefully with others contributing.” Does this sound adequate to you? In our opinion, this seems to be putting the cart before the horse.

The R.M. of Piney by-law, which prohibits the bulk removal of water by tanker trucks or pipelines, is not a new idea. According to a news release from the Government of Canada on February 10, 1999 concerning the strategy launched to prohibit the bulk removal of Canadian water, including water for export, they strongly caution that “Water is vital to ecosystems, human health, agriculture and industry. Bulk water removals may have cumulative effects on watersheds. Inter-basin transfers result in the introduction of non-native micro-organisms and exotic species, and the alteration of natural ecosystems and changes in water flows and tables. Climate change implications have heightened concerns about water removals.” We have simply followed their lead. The R. M. of Piney and our legal counsel believe that we have the right and responsibility through the municipal act as determined by the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in *Spraytech VS Hudson* to protect our citizens.

We recognize the importance of water as a resource that we are richly endowed with and envied by our municipal and city neighbours. Water is both a key to environmental health as well as being a scarce commodity having intrinsic value that must be managed in a sustainable way.

Questions or concerns we as Council have:

1. How can the Clean Environment Commission make a valid recommendation to the Minister of Conservation without having a complete understanding of groundwater sensitivity areas, adjacent aquifers and the impact of removing water in undetermined volumes?
  
2. Should this project takes place, what reason would there be to deny additional volumes to be licensed? It is our understanding that a proposal has never been rejected by the Province of Manitoba since The Environment Act was enacted in 1988.
  
3. Who will guarantee
  - a) that the residents of Sandilands and surrounding areas do not experience a shortage of water in their water systems? and
  - b) that the Municipality and other resource users will not experience an adverse effect in the surrounding ecosystems such as wetlands, forest, and fauna?

This specific aquifer is at the confluence of five watersheds, each with unique characteristics. However the proponents proposal understandably isolates their requests and concerns to the aquifer and well site. We have to deal responsibly with the bigger picture and long term effect on the Municipality.

How much information does the Water Stewardship and the Conservation Departments have on this most sensitive water recharge area?

Has there been a study extensive enough to justify a decision?

The Province has a responsibility to the general public, the CEC, the proponent (PWVC) and The R.M. of Piney to undertake a comprehensive study of the Sandilands Bedford Aquifer and related areas prior to issuing any license.

The R.M. of Piney insists that the mapping of the water sensitivity zones and aquifers be included in the study.

We respectfully request the support of the Clean Environment Commission, Pembina Valley Water Co-operative and all the Participants involved in this hearing to accomplish this task.

It would be irresponsible for the Province of Manitoba to allow this project to proceed without these proper studies being completed.