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(Commission Secretary)

To the committee:

I am speaking to you today to express my concerns about Louisiana Pacific's application to decommission its RTO's. I am not an expert on what is currently regarded as the mathematically safe levels of pollutants, however I am very grateful for the opportunity to stand before you and share my story and my concerns about this issue.

My concerns are twofold; I am immediately and primarily concerned about the potential effects of this decision on the health of myself and my family, particularly my 16 month old son, as well as the residents of my community and the communities surrounding the plant. Secondly, I am concerned about the social implications of a decision to do this. I believed Canada was moving forward with a national strategy to decrease levels of pollution – *we are already in phase 2 of the Canada-wide standards of benzene*. Are our leaders planning to step back in time, or move forward toward a greener, cleaner, and healthier Canada?

I first learned that LP had temporarily decommissioned its RTOs in our local paper, and I was shocked that our government would allow this risk to the health of our community without, it seemed to me, fully reviewing the issue. I wrote to the cec at that time with questions about this, and these are questions I am still asking.

And let me be clear how difficult it is for me to stand here and talk about this issue. I have certainly not jumped on a bandwagon. After doing my own research, and becoming informed to the level I could, I have taken a stand on an incredibly sensitive topic in the valley, that causes a great deal of stress to discuss. I am standing for the health of the people in this valley, I am standing for the health of my family and my son, it is outrageous that a company would provide a community with the ultimatum of pollution control or jobs – and it is devastating to know that others' livelihoods are at risk, and have already been impacted.

Yet I know I have reason to be concerned. First, I have yet to see a health risk assessment provided by LP that is written by an independent third party. And my questioning of the validity of LP's health assessment seems absolutely appropriate, when you consider that the first chemical assessed, formaldehyde – is assessed using the CIIT standards rather than the IRIS assessment that is generally in use, The CIIT standards are much lower, and are inconsistent with the health risks considered by our federal government.

So, I have been asking questions. And I have not received much for answers. First, why are we back here? What really has changed? The citizens of this community fought this fight over 10 years ago! At that time, your commission came out with recommendations that protect the health of the people of our valley, because of residents who chose to stand up and take a risk, despite the very real personal costs to them.

I understand that the LP plant has adopted some environmentally friendly practices, and they should be commended for that, however it is plain as day to me, that suggesting the RTO's can be turned off because these practices serve as a replacement is grossly untrue.

If the bark burners really eradicate the need for RTO's, then why would the company be applying for an increase in its emissions limits?

I do not understand how our government has considered this request to decommission RTO's when I look at the information around me. Increasingly, science is showing that we have not been protected enough from the toxic effects of chemicals. (SHOW MAG) Consumer reports are coming out based on this information! When I look at the information provided by Health Canada on the current causes of hospitalizations and deaths, it is mostly due to heart and lung disease, and cancer.

The Cancer Smart consumer guide cites 2007 Canadian Cancer statistics, when it notes that in the 1970's 1 in 5 people had a lifetime probability of developing cancer, Today, 1 in 2.3 Canadian men and 1 in 2.6 Canadian women are expected to develop cancer over their lifetime.

I am one of these statistics. I had cancer – a malignant melanoma – when I was 16 – and I heard on CBC the other day that this is becoming increasingly common. To this point, the onus has been on prevention through individual preventative practices – I need to wear a hat, and sunblock, for example. But we all know that is only part of the solution. The incidence of chronic disease has increased substantially these past decades, and now that we understand there is a link between pollutants and diseases such as cancer, we need to do what we can to prevent these diseases from happening. Across the board, we need to see higher standards, not an increase in emissions limits. Government and industry now have a huge role to play. It is obvious to me that as a society, we are not doing enough, when I see that we are exposed on a regular and ongoing basis to carcinogens, reproductive toxins, neurotoxins, and endocrine disruptors. Yet research is only half complete. We don't know how many of these chemicals interact inside our bodies. And when doing a health risk assessment, how often are the microenvironments we live in, considered? We don't live in a vacuum where LP's increased emissions are the only ones that matter. We live in a valley. A valley that relies heavily on agriculture, and its associated chemicals. In homes where we are already exposed to some levels of these contaminants. Like a good pharmacist, the committee needs to consider this decision's impact on our health, within the context of our true environments, before making a decision to decommission pollution controls.

I am aware that this multitude of chemicals goes far beyond LP, however within this context, we are talking about LP emitting some very dangerous chemicals!

My understanding is that at a basic level, toxic pollutants the Plant emits include VOC's, benzene, and formaldehyde, among others.

So what are the effects of some of these pollutants?

Formaldehyde and benzene both meet the definition of toxic substances under Schedule 1 of CEPA as of December 27, 2006. They are both classed as carcinogenic to humans. Benzene is a non-threshold toxicant – a substance for which, according to CEPA, there is considered to be some probability of harm for critical effects at any level of exposure.

The Canadian Council of Ministers for the Environment have recommended that benzene exposures be reduced wherever possible. They have implemented Canada Wide Standards for Benzene, of which Manitoba is participating (as of 2000).

Our government is considering an increase in benzene emissions to ease the economic stress on a plant. It strikes me that this can be likened to a pregnant woman who is given an alcoholic drink to ease her stress. The first, is somehow considered reasonable, the second absurd. Yet both are risking the health of the new baby.

Aside from being classed as a toxic substance and carcinogen by CEPA, Formaldehyde can cause irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract, and effects lung function. According to Environmental Defense, Respiratory toxins affect the breathing system. When these toxins are inhaled they affect the nasal passages, pharynx, trachea, bronchi, and lungs. These toxins cause both acute and chronic illnesses such as bronchitis, pulmonary fibrosis, emphysema, cancer, and general breathing problems. As irritants, respiratory toxins can also increase the severity and incidence of respiratory infections and can aggravate asthma.

In their 1998 document "National Ambient Air Quality Objectives for Particulate Matter: Executive Summary", by a CEPA working group, which I found on the Health Canada website, CEPA states: "While the mortality and hospitalization endpoints have been emphasized...they are really only the tip of the iceberg with respect to PM induced human health effects. Other adverse effects such as bronchitis, reduced lung function, restricted activity, absenteeism and increased costs for medication are evident, and are occurring at ambient concentrations currently experienced within Canada."

The more I have looked into the effects of toxic chemicals on our health, the more concerned I have become. My generation has been left a toxic legacy. Not only are we increasingly introduced to chemicals, it generally falls to governments or advocacy groups to prove that chemicals cause deleterious effects to humans or to the environment, unfortunately, by the time this can be proven, too many people have become statistics – they have already died, or become chronically ill from the effects of these chemicals.

In addition, while maximum exposure levels have often been studied, low-dose toxicity have not been studied. This needs to be considered before we increase the levels of toxic pollutants in our community, and if low-dose exposure has not been studied, it should be. In fact, in Environmental Defense's report "Polluted Children, Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution in Canadian Families", the author states "Historically, scientific studies on the health effects of chemicals involved feeding high doses of a single chemical to laboratory animals. Results from these studies have led to the false assumption that only a high dose of a chemical will negatively affect human health. There are several problems with this assumption, beginning with the fact that, by its very nature, a high dose test does not involve a test for health effects at low levels."

When looking at statistics on the health impacts of pollutants, please remember that every statistic is a life impacted by pollution, and often a life ended by pollution. And please

also remember that because vulnerable populations are more susceptible to the effects of pollution, that statistic you see is very likely an infant, a child, or an elder.

Environmental Defense has reported that Cancer is the most common cause of death by disease in Canadian children.⁵⁶ The most common form of cancer in children is leukemia followed by cancers of the spinal cord and brain.⁵⁷ In children, exposure to carcinogens in the womb during rapid fetal cell division contributes the greatest risk to developing cancer.

The health of our Valley will be impacted by your decision. I don't want a friend, family member, or any child to become a statistic of a future study on the toxic effect of chemicals and I certainly don't intend to have my family – my son – become one of those statistics.