

Clean Environment Commission

Public Hearing File 6119.00

Sio Silica (formerly CanWhite; formerly HD Minerals; formerly 1993502 Alberta Ltd; formerly 1824455 Alberta Ltd)

Dear Commissioners: the three weeks of the Sio Silica hearing were a real test of our ears, our eyes, our heads and our hearts! The experience was intense! The learning curve for most of us was Himalayan!! It was steep, pointed, wild, terrifying.

Though there were hours of discussion about technical points, simultaneously it seemed to me there was drama on a human level which might generate a contender for the *Canada Reads!!* contest, though I doubt you could make this stuff up!! What unfolded during the hearings left me wondering what we were actually talking about. Were we talking about drilling (mining) through the only source of water for the region, possibly threatening the lives of thousands of people, for the profit of a few? I will add, a few whose scientific capabilities did not bear scrutiny. Those few. Them few.

While serious matters like shale collapse and subsidence and jointed limestone and contaminated water and dissolved heavy metals were foremost, the undercurrent of an unspoken story ran like its own aquifer. This aquifer, however, was murky. It was heavy. It was silent and secretive. And, as one of the back story's protagonists often repeated, amazingly the unspoken story might actually have been 'simple and robust'! Remember hearing that phrase? 'Simple and robust'. If you were there, you would have heard that phrase. It was repeated many times. Gratingly. This fellow said the mining of the aquifers would be simple and robust. What did that mean?! Himalayan, for sure!

Wait a minute. This might be a contradiction!! A simple and robust method for mining aquifers, okay, let's buy that for a moment. Does that mean the hidden back story was simple and robust? Hmmm. We'd need proof. We'd all want proof. Or wait. We would want proof that life cannot exist without clean water and clean air. But do we need proof that there is probably some likelihood that drilling 10,000 wells through the aquifer might not lead to problems of some sort, like contamination, perhaps? That's a robust idea, at the very least. We might have just proved it is robust. Did we? Is it odd to think there is serious risk? We should be able to trust people who keep coming up with new and exciting promises about drilling thousands of wells through aquifers that people depend on. We can trust these folks, right? That's a simple idea, and maybe even a robust idea. It depends.

I admit there were contradictions during the CEC hearing. Mr. Schreyer bravely exclaimed during the Public Presentations in Beausejour that the hearing was Democracy in action. He spoke off the cuff, tossing out a Biblical reference. He

suggested that Sio Silica had gone through a miraculous conversion. From its earlier focus which was riveted upon frac sand, Sio had become a leader in the green economy. It was now a saviour of sorts who would lavish benefits not only upon the RM of Springfield but upon the whole world during this situation of severe trial which is climate change.

A few people missed the irony implied by the former Premier/Governor General/High Commissioner. They apparently believed that Sio Silica would deliver on its promises. But those individuals were in the minority. The majority of Public Presenters who appeared in person and those who sent in, as I am doing, a Written Submission, were overwhelmingly aware of the irony. Whether we all still remember our Bible lessons or not, most of us know that a conversion on the Road to Damascus is neither simple nor robust for anyone, let alone a mining company bent on marketing a population that is perhaps much smarter than Sio thinks.

But here we return to the back story, the murky alter-aquifer that has been running double time while honest citizen defenders struggle to state that NO RISK to the water is permissible (no irony!!). If simple and robust are what we are after, how about this: the truth is simple and was proven during the hearing. It was robustly clear that Sio Silica cannot be trusted to drill thousands of boreholes, industrial wells, into the groundwater. Period. Robustly clear.

During the Public Presentations in Anola, six students made a joint presentation. I heard them with my own ears and eyes. It was absolutely clear to me, robustly so, that the students from Seven Oaks Met School had identified the simple truth through arduous and accurate research. They came up with plans which were robust to the extent that they were practical and sensible, because these kids are worried. The simple truth is the future looks bleak to them. If business carries on as robustly as it has until now, if we keep allowing businesses who want to mine irreplaceable resources, and yet have only lackluster competency and lackluster diligence, then the truth is, for those kids, the future is “toast”. Burnt toast.



These kids *are* the future. They spotted the truth. They identified a way forward. When they presented, I had no sense of the [alter-aquifer](#). It had disappeared. I did not feel a tangle of heavy and murky manipulation around my ankles. Gone. There was nothing murky swirling. There was no back story. Does that mean that manipulation is the back story? Too simple? Is there more to the back story?

Doesn't matter. The kids matter. Leadership matters. I wrote to the Minister, recently appointed, the Honourable Kevin Klein. He has six children himself. He must hear a lot of simple truths. He must get it – how important the simple truth is. Anyway, I urged him to call the six students, to invite them to his office. I said, call the press. Go with transparency. Bring this all into the open. The idea of drilling through aquifers is insane. Ask people. They will tell you it is insane. Ask the kids they will tell you...

Without belaboring simplicity, in the hope we can let "simple and robust" go, because they can be grating, why don't we look more closely at leadership? The Minister will make the ultimate decision. The people don't actually get to vote on this. The people are the ones who are impacted, but the Minister has the power. How will he decide?

The Minister will rely upon the recommendations of the Commission. What does that mean? Perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps what matters is that the Minister has courage. Perhaps also, the Minister will have wisdom. He has children, he must have wisdom. Their future depends upon it.

The CEC hearings were technical, and complex. Many fine and brilliant people stepped up to shine a light on this aspect and that. To my mind, the very highlight of the

hearings, however, were the public presentations, whether oral or written. My gosh, people really got it, they understood – they understood the technical details enough to categorically declare it was absurd to even consider mining the aquifer. And they understood how important it was that they take the leadership role to the leaders. The people are behaving like leaders. The students understood that was what they had to do. The letter writers knew that, too, as did the oral presenters. They all got it. Now the Minister has to get it. It may be harder for him to get it because we don't know where the back story has got to. We just know it goes away when the simple truth becomes apparent.

The RM of Springfield elected a new mayor and three new councilors in October, five months ago. These individuals are among the cast of characters who have been swimming hard to learn what leadership means in the relationship they have with the people who elected them. One might think that is simple to determine, but not necessarily. It depends. Anyway, it looks like two of the councilors, for sure, do get it. They understand what the kids have told us. Don't let Sio go one step further. Shut them down. Shake your head. Think for a moment how things will go if you gamble and lose. Water is not for gambling. Say NO to SIO. So two councilors have shifted from the cast of characters to the cast *with* character. That took courage. And it took wisdom. And it must feel great, simply great! Case closed.

Please register my categorical opposition to approval of the Sio Silica application.

Please register my categorical support for protection of the aquifers in the MSSCA (Municipal Silica Sand Committee) and Springfield regions.

Gloria Romaniuk [REDACTED]

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