

From: [REDACTED]
To: [+WPG725 - Clean Environment Commission](#)
Subject: Written statement in opposition of the Sio Silica Project
Date: March 19, 2023 11:01:37 AM

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Dear CEC,

I'm writing to the Clean Environment Commission to oppose Sio Silica's Silica Sand Extraction Project in southeastern Manitoba.

My husband and I moved to the RM of Springfield 6 years ago because we wanted to be closer to nature. We currently own an acreage where we enjoy bird watching, taking care of our beehives, and tending to our large garden, which provides food for friends and family. This is truly our paradise.

When I heard that Sio Silica, formerly known as CanWhite, was planning on mining silica sand from our drinking water aquifer, my stomach absolutely sank. I was shocked to hear that this project was even being considered because at that time, southern Manitoba was experiencing a severe drought, which resulted in some communities restricting water use.

After attending the hearing in Anola and Beausejour, I came to understand that the mining technique proposed by Sio Silica is untested and unproven, and risks the only source of drinking water for thousands of Manitobans. Not only does this project threaten the quality of our drinking water but it threatens the integrity of the aquifer itself, which has been confirmed by engineers on both sides.

At the hearing, I also learned that Sio Silica did not follow proper protocols and split their project so that the impacts of the processing plant and mining would be assessed as two separate entities. How are we, residents of Springfield and other municipalities, supposed to trust the process when Sio Silica and the Manitoba Government are acting in bad faith?

As a resident of Springfield, I am extremely worried about the consequences of this project. I'm worried about the aquifer failing and the risks of contamination. The Guardian recently published an article titled "Revealed: the US is averaging one chemical accident every two days", in which it analyzes data collected from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and non-profit groups that track accidental chemical spills. In 2023 alone, there were more than 30 incidents recorded. All of these projects were approved as being "safe" by the EPA and yet accidents still happened. If the CEC decides to approve this project and deem it "safe", who will be responsible for remedying the situation if our aquifer fails or becomes contaminated due to unforeseen accidents? Additionally, many mining companies cease operation before paying the costs of closing their mines and remediating the area (eg. Wolverine Mine) and are rarely held accountable for the impact that they have on the environment. Is the CEC thinking of the 100,000 residents that will be affected if something happens to our drinking water?

Throughout the hearing, I've heard from the very few people, and I emphasize very few, in favour of the project say that we need green renewable energy like solar panels to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and as a biologist and environmentalist myself, I agree. However, climate change is also predicted to reduce the accessibility of clean drinking water so we should be doing everything in our power to protect this precious resource. I would also like to highlight that Sio Silica, formerly CanWhite, initially said that their silica sand would be used for fracking and we have no guarantee that this sand will not be used for fracking in the future – is this how Sio Silica plans to mitigate climate change? I also heard from one community member in favour of the project say that small communities like ours need the jobs or else communities will die. I would also argue that these

communities will die without access to clean drinking water. We cannot drink sand and we cannot eat money.

The world health organization estimates that 40% of people across the world currently do not have access to clean drinking water and this number is estimated to increase with climate change but you don't have to look far to find communities that fall into this category. In Manitoba alone, over 30 First Nations communities don't have access to clean drinking water.

"When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, and the last river poisoned, only then will we realize that one cannot eat money". This phrase is traced back to Alanis Obomsawin from the Odanak Reserve and was written in 1972. We as humans have clearly not learned our lessons in the last 50 years. Clean water is an invaluable and finite resource and should not be taken for granted.

To the CEC, I ask the following questions:

1. How much financial insurance does Sio Silica have to remedy any issues that arise?
2. How much money has Sio Silica dedicated to cleaning up mine sites after they are finished with them?
3. Do they have enough capital to cover the costs of trucking clean water to every household, business, farm, hospital, and school in southeastern Manitoba, if our aquifer becomes contaminated or fails?
4. How will the proposed 10,000 wells be monitored over the 24-year project? Some of these wells will be on private properties, how does Sio Silica propose to monitor them?
5. Who will be responsible for monitoring the wells once the project has ended or Sio Silica becomes bankrupt and leaves the province?
6. How will we be notified that our aquifer has been contaminated and how soon after the contamination has been discovered, will residents be notified?
7. Who will monitor the impacts of 24/7 drilling and processing on the flora and fauna in the area?
8. Does the Manitoba Government have a contingency plan in place in the event that our aquifer is contaminated or fails?
9. Will the residents of southeastern Manitoba be compensated for the decrease in property values if the aquifer fails? If so, who will be responsible for covering the cost?
10. If southern Manitoba experiences a drought, will Sio Silica reduce their mining activities or will restricted use be limited to just residents?
11. Is the CEC taking all of these risks into consideration or does the millions of dollars promised by Sio Silica to the province outweigh the voices of the community?
12. To the CEC, would you want this in your backyard? Would you be willing to risk your own drinking water?

If the answer is no, then I ask you to oppose this project.

Sincerely,

Justine Hudson