

January 17, 2022

Re: SilicaSandExtractionProject

Dear Clean Environment Commission

I am writing to express my concern regarding recent developments regarding the frac sand mine industry in Manitoba, and specifically, the CanWhite Sands Corp project near Vivian in the RM of Springfield. My overriding concern is that the Indigenous right to Free, Prior and Informed consent has not been implemented in this decision. So it is OK to slow down and consider all the factors.

I am aware of several objections to this project:

1) Approval of the CanWhite Sands project is not following the proper protocols.

Starting in 2018, CanWhite failed to submit a “mine closure plan and financial assurance” to the Director of Manitoba Mines Branch along with its application. Despite this fact, the processing plant portion of this project is now in the process of being quietly approved by the Manitoba government, a fact which I am appealing here. Further, by treating the mine and the processing plant as two separate applications, CanWhite and now the Manitoba government have allowed this project to evade the full environmental assessment it merits.

2) CanWhite has no known track record of work in frac sands.

Despite any known experience in this industry, CanWhite plans to use a never-been-used-before method of extraction. Further, it appears likely CanWhite does not possess the financial assets necessary to carry out this project (at last public count, only \$8M of \$100M had been secured from investors). I stand firmly opposed to the Manitoba government taking any future action to bail out this less than stable company.

3) Frac sand mines are known to have both immediate and long-term negative impacts on the communities in which they are situated.

Frac sand mines have become the source of noise, light, and, most importantly, air pollution. The silica dust created by frac sand mining is a known carcinogen and, as such, represents a clear hazard to local residents. Further, the process of frac sand mining itself has the clear potential to pollute and forever damage the aquifer that provides drinking water to communities throughout southeastern Manitoba. This includes the First Nation community of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

4) The main purpose of frac sand mining is to facilitate further expansion of the fossil fuel industry in Canada.

In its most recent report, the IPCC, representing hundreds of scientists around the world, is unequivocal in its urging that the fossil fuel industry must be scaled down (and not further propped up) if our planet is to avoid a warming of 1.5 degrees over pre-industrial levels. Manitobans, like people everywhere, are anxious about our futures and are demanding that real climate action be taken to protect our collective future.

I am aware that several organizations are mobilizing to resist the approval of the CanWhite project and I intend to stay connected to their campaigns to see that justice is done for Manitobans of today and for those of future generations.

Sincerely,  
Paul Gehrs

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