

## NEWS RELEASE

### TOO MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:

#### CEC must say no to Vivian Silica Sand Extraction Project

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- How will Sio Silica close off its wells to protect our drinking water from contamination?
- How will important aquifers be protected when the shale layer collapses?
- Will future residents of southeastern Manitoba be able to rely on these aquifers for good, clean water as we do today?

These are just a few of the critically important questions that remain unanswered by Sio Silica at the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (CEC) hearing, which wraps up today with closing arguments in Beausejour.

The proposed Vivian Silica Sand Extraction Project will have wide-ranging impacts for decades to come on the water everyone relies on in eastern Manitoba, for drinking, agriculture and industry.

“Sio Silica has simply not completed its due diligence. A project of this magnitude posing this many risks demands much more rigorous, independent scrutiny,” **said Glen Koroluk, Executive Director of the Manitoba Eco-Network.** “There are so many unanswered questions in this process, but we do know that the project will jeopardize the clean water in southeast Manitoba’s aquifers. Our strong recommendation to the CEC is that this project should not proceed.”

The Manitoba Eco-Network (MBEN) and Our Line in the Sand (OLS) are submitting their closing argument TODAY at the CEC on behalf of concerned citizens who are trying to protect the watershed in eastern Manitoba.

Sio Silica wants to extract silica sand in a mining operation near Vivian, Manitoba, drilling as many as 10,000 extraction wells in the area over the next 24 years.

OLS and MBEN hired independent experts Matrix Solutions to evaluate Sio's proposal. Louis-Charles Boutin, principal groundwater engineer at Matrix with 20 years of experience in the hydrogeology consulting industry, presented serious concerns to the CEC.

He identified two critical irreversible effects the project has on the hydrogeological system that could lead to indirect effects in the long-term. First is degradation of the Winnipeg Shale Aquitard; and, second is an increase in fracture density of the Red River Carbonate Aquifer. Both effects increase the vulnerability of the groundwater system.

Under the topsoil in southeastern Manitoba, there is a limestone aquifer and a sandstone aquifer that are separated by a protective layer of shale (called the Winnipeg Shale Aquitard).

If Sio Silica is permitted to drill thousands of wells through the limestone and through the shale to remove sand, many large caverns will open up underground. The protective shale layer is expected to collapse into these caverns around each well. When the two aquifers are no longer separated, the pristine groundwater in southeastern Manitoba will be put at risk.

"Thousands of Manitobans rely on this water as their source of drinking water. We have an obligation to protect these aquifers today, and for the benefit of future generations of Manitobans," said **Tangi Bell, President, Our Line in the Sand**, who also lives just outside of Anola.

Of further concern, Sio Silica plans to use an extraction technique that has never been tried before as a full-scale mining method.

"Manitobans deserve an environmental assessment process that adequately assesses environmental risks. This process has given no certainty that Manitobans will be protected from the risks of this project" said Koroluk. "We will ask the CEC to recommend **no** licence be issued for this incomplete proposal."

At the conclusion of this hearing, the CEC is expected to write a report with its recommendation within approximately three months, which will be released to the public. Under The Environment Act, the CEC provides advice and recommendations to the Minister of the Environment and Climate, the Honourable Kevin Klein. The Director of the Environmental Approvals Branch will consider the report and make a final decision on the project. The CEC, while reporting directly to the Minister, is independent of the Department of Environment and Climate.

OLS and MBEN are represented by the Public Interest Law Centre (Legal Aid Manitoba).

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*Our Line in the Sand is a group of concerned citizens advocating to protect the Watershed in eastern Manitoba. Many members of OLS rely on the aquifers that will be affected by this project for drinking water in their homes.*

*Manitoba Eco-Network is a public interest environmental organization seeking to promote and facilitate good environmental governance and the protection of Manitoba's environment for the benefit of current and future generations.*

<https://mbeconetwork.org/>

*Matrix Solutions Inc: [matrix-solutions.com](http://matrix-solutions.com)* Our Line in the Sand (OLS) is a group of concerned citizens  
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