



## Manitoba Government Ignores Aquifer Contamination Issue

Written by: Don Sullivan – Nov. 14, 2020

Under the cover of Manitoba's growing pandemic crisis, the Pallister government released, on November 5<sup>th</sup> to its Public Registry, all of the public comments and Technical Advisory Committee responses to CanWhite Sands Corp. proposed silica sand project.

In addition, the Director of the Environmental Approval Branch made a recommendation that the Manitoba Minister of Conservation and Climate not hold Clean Environment Commission public hearing on the proposed CanWhite Sands silica sand project because. *"potential environmental effects and potential mitigation strategies are well understood."*

I am at a complete loss to understand how all the potential environmental effects and potential mitigation strategies are well understood regarding this development project, when the government of Manitoba steadfastly refuses to review CanWhite Sands Corp. mine and unconventional mining method as part of the current provincial environmental review process.

Even the government of Manitoba's own Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were questioning why the mine and mining method was not being done in conjunction with the company's processing facility, when one of the TAC members stated... *"the processing plant will require that the necessary supplies of sand be secured, we recommend that the approvals associated with these two applications be linked."*

More importantly it was revealed, after public comments were closed, in a letter dated September 11, 2020, written by the President and CEO of CanWhite Sands Corp, Mr. Feisal Somji. that large volumes of potentially highly toxic water from CanWhite Sands unconventional mining method would be returned to the aquifer that provides potable drinking water to all of southeastern Manitoba.

Based on this new information, provided by the President and CEO of CanWhite, this would make the proposed silica sand development project a Class 3 Development as defined in the regulations under the Manitoba Environment Act.

Yet, the Pallister government continues treat this proposed development project as a Class 2 Development.

The Director of Environmental Approvals also requested that CanWhite Sands Corp undertake a public meeting to *“addresses the TAC and public concerns that have been raised during the assessment process related to both the proposed sand processing facility and the sand extraction project to be proposed at a later date.”*

On November 12, 2020. nine Manitoba based organizations issued a public statement in regards to CanWhite Sands proposed meeting ,stating among other things, that..”*a CanWhite Sands Corp. (proponent) led public meeting process in no way meets the formal requirement to have the company submit third party technical information and data on their mine and mining method and submit said information as an Environmental Act Proposal under the Manitoba Environment Act, so that both the public and government experts can review the entirety of CanWhite Sands Corp. proposed development as one project.”*

This public statement further noted that a CanWhite Sands lead meeting *“does not in any way meet the standard of a Section 35 Consultation process that must be undertaken when there may be an infringement on Aboriginal and Métis rights...”* .

A Section 35 Consultation process is the legal responsibility of government and not the responsibility of industry.

It was painfully evident, in August of 2020, that the Pallister government was not interested in protecting the potable water of Southeastern Manitoba, nor was it interested in having a transparent public process, where substantive issues and concerns could be aired and addressed, when they decided to not review CanWhite Sands silica sand mine and unconventional mining method.

Thus, back in August five separate requests were made to the Federal Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to use his authority to review and assess CanWhite Sands Corp proposed processing facility, its mine and mining method as one project under the federal Impact Assessment Act., as there are number of legitimate reasons for the federal Minister to do so.

The Federal Minister to date has yet to make that decision.

While I can understand that Manitoba is in the midst of a pandemic crisis, but it is not an excuse for the Pallister government to completely ignore its responsibilities of ensuring those living in southeastern Manitoba have access to clean potable drinking water and his government should be held accountable for its inexcusable actions with respect to assessing and reviewing this proposed development project.