

MINING FOR SILICA SAND

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

It is well known that a mining company from Calgary has been drilling core samples from Springfield, Tache and points south for the past couple of years. They recently announced to the public that what they had found is silica sand. This is a very valuable commodity. We all know that despite protest, plans are underway to mine this sand from the Hollow Water Reserve. While their deposit is very near to the surface, the deposit that has been found in Vivian is 200 ft. beneath the surface. Despite that, and despite no environmental assessments of the effects of mining silica sand, particularly in an area of urban density, there is work already underway on the south side of the CNR tracks in Vivian.

I was approached by an individual representing a group of residents of Vivian regarding this matter that mirrored my own concerns. I had sent a letter to the Clipper some time ago and they chose not to publish it. This is what I sent the Editor, Mr. Buss.

I did not attend the meeting in Anola regarding HD Minerals revealing their intent with bore holes being drilled in the past couple of years in the area. The intent is to mine sand to be used in oil and gas fracking, I have now discovered. Aside from the impact that in all likelihood extraction would have on the wells serviced by the aquifer in which the sand is located, it is silica sand which carries significant health risks and is 200 ft. beneath the surface, requiring enormous amounts of water to bring it to the surface, if I am correct as to the way it will be mined. No amount of revenue is worth the risk of losing our supply of potable water. It is the most valuable commodity on our planet and global supply is regularly being diminished by irresponsible use. We are robbing future generations of the life we enjoyed and that is reprehensible. Mars may have had water flowing on its surface at one time but do you really want to move to a planet where winter is perpetual? I think not. Protect the home you have now by raising your voice in protest and move swiftly to good stewardship of our environment before that is no longer an option. The time has passed for delay. It is now or never!

Our Council is being to say the least less than transparent when they choose to put the discussion of this issue In Camera or Closed Session. Any kind of drilling above an aquifer must be carefully scrutinized and monitored. In fact, any activity around our aquifers should be more closely regulated. Water is a requirement of life. It is in short supply globally. It has come up at Council recently with the drilling of new municipal wells on Poplar Road south of #15 which led to a number of wells failing and now there is a huge elevator being constructed just adjacent to our new municipal wells that are supposed to be supplying Dugald with water and acting as a back up for the wells on Heatherdale that supply Oakbank and Dugald. Elevators require large volumes of water. The contractors for both the new municipal wells and the silica sand projects are the same, Landmark Planning and Friesen Drillers. Both enterprises may impact private residents' wells from Dugald to Vivian and beyond. Why is our Council not trying to inform the public that elected them of the potential risk to the health and well being of residents? Instead it was relegated to a Closed Meeting. That same aquifer to the south and east is being threatened due to an asphalt plant supplying material for the resurfacing of Hwy #15 located in a depleted gravel pit on #302 for which great pains were taken by at least Councillor Wilson to ensure adequate safeguards were in place and close monitoring would be conducted. I have asked repeatedly whether these inspections are being done and records kept without success.

Silica sand and its dust penetrates the lungs and can lead to premature death. I presume when drilling that deep for the product, the contamination could leach into the aquifer making the water non potable. This is a HEALTH and SAFETY issue. No amount of return can replace drinking water and good health.