

PRESS RELEASE

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Joint Press Release by Andy Kuczynski and Mark Miller

Public Forum Engages & Updates Residents on Sio Silica and WMR

Nearly 300 Springfield Residents Attend Public Meeting Opposing Sio Silica and WMR 20-50

Cook's Creek, Manitoba: An estimated 300 concerned residents filled the Cook's Creek Community Centre in a public engagement forum hosted by Springfield Councillors Andy Kuczynski and Mark Miller. It demonstrated a powerful community response to ongoing concerns about Sio Silica's on-going proposed silica sand mining project and Springfield's future within the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR) including the shelved Plan 20-50 and Bill 4 going forward.

Kuczynski and Miller were pleased to welcome political reps attending including NDP MLA Rachelle Schott, former MP/MLA Dr. Jon Gerrard and Manitoba Liberal Party Leader Willard Reaves, as well as, several past and current Springfield council and Sunrise SD trustees.

Georgina Mustard, a fourth-generation resident living next to the proposed mining site, delivered a moving personal testimony detailing the severe risk the proposed Sio Silica sand extraction potentially poses to the sensitive groundwater aquifer and generational farm land. Tangi Bell (Our Line in the Sand) highlighted the Ethics Commission findings against former PC Premier Stefanson and her PC Ministers with Sio and concerns on the Manitoba mining licencing process.

Independent expert Ken Drysdale provided an overview of the WMR and their shelved 20-50 Plan, confirming that while the Region consists of Winnipeg and 17 municipalities, all votes are weighted by population, meaning the City of Winnipeg would maintain veto power over Springfield and capital regional land planning decisions. He clarified that municipalities may choose to opt out now and later opt back in after reviewing the updated WMR plan expected no later than January 2027. Opting out maybe the best strategic option to protect ones' local autonomy.

A pivotal moment occurred when a resident asked Sio Silica President Carla Devlin (also a general contractor/property developer and the Mayor of East St. Paul) whether the company would guarantee protection of Springfield's drinking water and provide financial compensation if contamination occurred. Devlin did not provide a direct answer, referring only to future corporate "open houses."

Thankfully, the NDP government including Premier Kinew and then Environment and Climate Change Minister Tracy Schmidt, did not approve the Sio Silica license in 2024. However, it is anticipated a new Sio application maybe submitted in the new year and Miller and Kuczynski are aiming to be ready to review and challenge any application that may affect our water.

Councillors Miller and Kuczynski further publicly committed to supporting Recall legislation, if re-elected, allowing residents to remove elected officials during their term. This is a unique political accountability and transparency tool currently in place within Alberta and British Columbia.

“Springfield is a rural municipality with a distinct identity, not a suburb of Winnipeg,” said Councillor Kuczynski. “We are fighting to keep decision-making in the hands of local residents”.

Mark Miller expressed “appreciation to the many volunteers and residents who sacrificed their evening to be part of this extraordinary evening of dialogue which helps shape our community”. Thanks to Ernie and Tamara Nathaniel (Interlace Media) for premiering the Sio documentary Trailer and Dr. Daniel Page for video recording this special event.

Miller and Kuczynski committed to protecting water, southeast Manitoba’s aquifer, upholding public input between elections and offered to host additional public engagement forums to keep the people aware and to hear concerns and ideas from all residents.

The meeting concluded with strong accolades of encouragement to the councillors for hosting the meeting and continued calls for protection of groundwater, farmland, and municipal independence.

Public Facebook URL: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1BWGEJczbo/>

Public YouTube URL: <https://youtu.be/xMB5Pc6qB-8?si=8qMeMRwsPlgypVU9>

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