

Union deals in facts only

To the Editor:
We would like to respond to those who are in opposition to LP's request for decommissioning of its Regenerative Thermal Oxidizers (RTO's).

RTO's are one component of LP's environmental license requirements.

One component that is not required anywhere else in Canada.

There is a sound reason for that.

It is felt OSB manufacturers in Canada can comply with environmental standards by using other measures. Other measures which are less costly, more effective, and more efficient.

Lets be very clear. We as workers are in support of Louisiana Pacific's recent request to the Province of Manitoba to amend its environmental license by decommissioning its RTO's.

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Chris Parlow and I am President of United Steelworkers Local 1-324. Previously, I have held other positions in our Local including Health and Safety Co-Chair, followed by Regional Health and Safety Director.

The United Steelworkers represent workers in workplaces across Manitoba and Canada in numbers exceeding a quarter of a million workers. We are proud to be the largest private sector union in the world representing workers (three million) and their families, and communities in the U.S, Great Britain, Ireland, etc.

In Manitoba we represent workers in communities from Thompson down to Winnipeg including Wabowden, Cranberry, The Pas, Moose Lake, Birch River, Swan River, Minitonas, Roblin, Neepawa, and points in

between involved in the Forestry Sector.

Of key importance to us is the health and well being of our members, their families, and communities in which we reside. We participate vigorously at the plant, community, provincial, and national levels when it comes to healthy workplace environments for workers.

Swan Valley residents, Darren Chmelowski and Lyle Sagert, participate at the LP plant as well as provincially on behalf of their co-workers and others.

LP has made sure we have been made aware of what is taking place throughout this process. We appreciate that.

Health and Safety legislation, both national and provincial, has been fought for tenaciously by United Steelworkers in communities across Canada, and around the world.

As with all health and safety related issues we base our determinations on each situation by fact finding via investigations and other resources.

One such situation which we as workers have been following up on is seeking information related to the request by Louisiana Pacific in Minitonas, Manitoba to decommission their RTO's (Regenerative Thermal Oxidizers), which are one component of their environmental license.

LP voluntarily had the RTO's installed when they built the operation in 1994.

This was unprecedented in Canada, at that time and since.

To this day no other OSB mill in Canada has RTO's, which entail huge expenditures in order to run, and replace after its life span.

As workers, we don't see how burdening LP with expenses no other Canadian

OSB manufacturer has to endure, is of benefit to the company, community, or province.

This economic crisis in the forest industry is closing down operations from coast to coast with everything being equal.

This would be an unequal playing field. As Manitobans, we know a fair shake when we get one.

This is not a fair shake. To expect LP to tackle unnecessary costs, for the sake of those in opposition who feel its necessary to hit this company when its down because of their allegations which have no foundation, is truly not right.

All the evidence shows LP can comply with Manitobas environmental requirements without the RTO's.

We feel those in opposition have no way of showing the removal of the RTO's will harm anyone.

As workers, we don't always see eye to eye with the company. However, we know when they are deserving of more respect.

This is one of those times.

You will note that those in opposition like to write on the chalkboard of discontent with half truths written in innuendos and plenty of fear mongering.

As Manitobans we take a great deal of pride in our stewardship of the environment. We also take pride in our stewardship of the truth.

A earlier announcement on March 2nd, 2009 by the Green Party of Manitoba to Manitoba Conservation contesting this amendment to the environmental license is indicative of a half truth.

(The Green Party of Manitoba (GPM), on behalf of all Manitobans) The United Steelworkers Local 1-324 members who are

employed by LP, are certainly a part of Manitoba along with their families, and community members, and they understand that the Green Party doesn't speak for them.

We speak for ourselves thank you very much.

On another website the organization Western Canada Wilderness Committee, identifies that logging in and around the Duck Mountain area "is already more extensive than the local ecosystem can handle".

Inflammatory, and without factual evidence to support such broad condemnation".

Local long term critic of LP Dan Soprovich of Swan River is quoted as saying

"This is a cost driven decision that will compromise human health and the environment as a means to support an American company that has taken millions of dollars out of this province."

I would like to respond to this irresponsible statement which is laced with innuendo that is unfair and defamatory in nature. Soprovich has no way of knowing that human health and the environment "Will" be compromised by removal of the RTO's which still requires the company to fulfill its requirements to comply with environmental standards in Manitoba.

Furthermore, Soprovich intentionally depicts LP as being an American company that has taken millions of dollars out of this province, while not giving mention to the value of what LP brought to the Swan Valley region, which has been in the untold hundreds of millions of dollars via investment capital, good paying jobs both direct and indirect, enabling workers to support real estate, and merchants goals, training and technology.

This is an example of a

good corporate citizen in the community.

Folks, if many of these people in opposition to this environmental license amendment had their way the Forestry Sector in Manitoba would cease to exist.

It could be alleged they would like to see this amendment to LP's environmental license be denied, causing it to be the straw that broke LP's back and possibly closing permanently.

Close doors that have facilitated growth and hope for a better future for Swan Valley families.

This Company deserves better. So do Manitobans, who know better than to believe these fear mongers.

Again be clear.

Despite the regenerative sustainability of our industry, via treeplanting and other measures many would prefer not another tree be cut.

They utilize half truths, and fear mongering to justify their position.

We want the truth.

We feel the truth is that this company has been very committed to controlling emissions and undertaking to comply with all environmental standards. Their past record over the many years in the valley is indicative of this commitment to Manitobas environment.

It has shown its gameplan as to how it will continue to accomplish this without the RTO's.

Recently Manitobas Assistant Deputy Minister of Conservation Ryan Coulter stated on CBC radio that " monitoring at the site has shown that pollutants do not seem to have exceeded allowable limits since the abatement of the RTO's."

Reliable professionals in the field utilized as consultants evidence shows the

same.

There continues to be no evidence to show allowable limits will be exceeded with the RTO's offline. We as workers view that as factual and vital to this matter.

Lets remind ourselves that this amendment LP is requesting in its existing environmental license is an amendment that no where else in Canada OSB (Oriented Strandboard)

Manufacturers have to be in compliance with.

(No other Canadian OSB Manufacturer has RTO's)

Our question as workers has been and continues to be if Louisiana Pacific can control its emissions at a reduced cost in a way that is in compliance with Manitoba Environmental

Standards why should they be prevented from doing that?

Especially since the facts are that greenhouse gas effects will be reduced as a result of this amendment also.

Manitoba has seen the layoffs of thousands of workers in the Forest Industry Sector in direct and indirect jobs.

We support fairness not fear mongering.

We support facts not fiction.

We support this company that has supported us workers, our families and communities in which we live.

Public Hearings will take place in Swan River during the last week of July.

We look forward to participating in achieving the truth, which will ensure that the last straw is no where near our backs.

**Chris.T.Parlow
President
United Steelworkers
Local 1-324**

Concerned citizens wanted a public hearing

To the Editor:

On June 25th/09 the Concerned Citizens of the Valley received a short two paragraph letter from Conservation Minister Stan Struthers in answer to our five page letter sent to the Minister on May 19th. The requests in our May 19th letter were very similar to those made in an article published in the Star and Times June 16th entitled "Locals Criticize CEC Process"

Minister Struthers has decided to order the Clean Environment Commission to conduct an "investigation" and hold a "public meeting" on July 28 and 29, 2009 into Louisiana Pacific's request to alter its pollution control equipment

[RTO's] in its local mill. This process of conducting an "investigation" and holding a "public meeting" would allow the CEC panel members to question or cross-examine any presenters such as the government or LP consultants. However, citizens of the Swan Valley who attend this "public meeting" would only be allowed to make presentations to the panel, but would not be allowed to question or cross-examine Louisiana Pacific and their consultants. This is our backyard! Why will the Minister not allow us to question a development that affects us in our backyard?

In order for Swan Valley citizens to be able to participate fully in the upcoming CEC process, the Minister would need to designate it as a full "public hearing". This would provide opportunity for everyone to question and cross-examine.

In the Minister's short reply of June 25, he simply reiterates his previous statement: the CEC

process will be an investigation and public meeting, not a public hearing!

Following the CEC public hearing in the 1990's in which the Concerned Citizens participated fully and which led to the requirement that LP install RTO's in the mill in order to protect the community, the CEC acknowledged the contribution of the Concerned Citizens of the Valley and other members of the public in its 1994 report on Public Hearings where it wrote: "The public has contributed significantly to the panel,.....It is vital that the public's interest and involvement in environmental reviews be supported and facilitated in the future."

So the question arises, why does the Minister not want a public hearing?

Some possible answers to this question follow:

1. Under a public hearing the Conservation Minister has to reply publicly to the CEC recommendations in their report and indicate why he does or does not accept them.

2. The people participating in a public hearing must take an oath to tell the truth.

3. On March 13/09, Dave Bezak [Conservation Department], in an email to Laurie Streich, expressed concern about Louisiana Pacific's program to monitor the air quality with regard to the Swan Valley mill. In his view the frequency of sample collection of phenol, hydrogen cyanide, MDI and formaldehyde was "just too infrequent to possibly capture an air sample that might be impacted by facility emissions." How can Manitoba Conservation consider increasing emission levels when the prior levels had not been adequately monitored? Is it not Conservation's job to check

on the effect of the OSB mill on the health of the citizens of the valley?

4. The LP mill emits a number of carcinogens [chemicals which cause cancer] including benzene and formaldehyde. The Department of Conservation appears to have changed its mind over the years as to the amount of harmful emissions that will be allowed to go up the LP stacks and into the air of the Valley.

In September 2007, when LP requested an increase in the levels of benzene and formaldehyde emissions allowed to go up the stacks, Conservation Director Tracy Braun wrote: "Based on the fact that benzene is a known carcinogen, it is the requirement of Manitoba Conservation that benzene emissions must be reduced or eliminated wherever possible."

Fast forward a year, and in November 2008, LP filed an application to increase the emission levels of benzene and formaldehyde and several other contaminants, followed by a request in December to suspend operation of the pollution control devices-RTO's. The result as we all know, was that on January 8th 2009 the Department of Conservation authorized suspension of the RTO's.

So in 16 months the Department of Conservation went from refusing an increase in benzene emissions to authorizing the interim suspension of the pollution controls that limit benzene emissions. Perhaps Minister Struthers did not want to witness the cross-examination of members of his department which could occur if he allowed the CEC meeting to become a public hearing.

5. The reason LP gave for wanting to suspend the RTO's

was financial: they could not afford the cost of operating the RTO equipment. This contradicts reports about LP on the internet. Under a headline "LP meets potential UK distributors" Moscow July 1st 2009 they report: " Louisiana Pacific has met four potential UK wholesale distributors to represent its SolidStart engineered wood products, WBPI reports".

"The move comes as LP accelerates its plans to also enter the Australian and Japanese markets, as part of a concerted campaign to grow market share and capitalize on Weyerhaeuser's retreat from the international engineered timber market."

Also: "We have invested a lot during a down market, which shows the commitment of LP to expand internationally." said Al Huber, LP's international sales manager of engineered wood products. See website: [HTTP://mucai.lesprom.com/news/39208](http://mucai.lesprom.com/news/39208)

Also the magazine Wood Based Panels Internatioals predicts increase in housing starts and states, "This will help lift North American wood panel demand, particularly OSB, in late 2009 and in 2010, where a 25% increase to 40 billion square feet is predicted.

The above information indicates that LP can well afford to pay the operating and capital costs for their mill in Swan Valley. It appears that their threat to shut down the mill served the purpose of saving a few dollars to put towards their international expansion.

Further, if LP wishes to continue harvesting the cheap wood in the Duck Mountains, they have the option to change their present pollution control mechanism to biofiltration, which uses

bacteria to clean the air. Biofiltration plants have been certified by the Environmental Protection Agency for use in the US and LP is using this pollution control device at the present time.

"Companies using Bio-Reaction's technology are able to save up to 90% in operating costs and reduce their carbon footprint by 85% or more." [April 28, 2009 letter from Bill Purcell, Bio-Reaction Industries to Dr. Peter Miller, Member of LP Swan Valley Stakeholders Advisory Committee; also see www.bioreaction.com].

So if Louisiana Pacific changed their pollution control device from RTO's to biofiltration, they would reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions and protect the health of this community from hazardous air pollutants; a win-win situation.

The US has developed National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants-Neshap- to protect their citizens. Unfortunately Canada does not have air quality standards and that is why LP builds OSB mills in Canada.

One of the members of our group: Concerned Citizens of the Valley has conducted extensive research regarding LP mills in the US. His findings: all LP OSB mills except one in the State of Georgia [capacity unknown] operate pollution control devices approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. However, the mill in Georgia is also the subject of a study on air pollution and schools and the impacts on children. Volatile Organic Compounds-VOC's at low levels can cause respiratory illness and nervous disorders.

Quote from site: Children are uniquely susceptible to the dan-

gers posed by many sorts of toxic chemicals because they breathe more deeply than adults, and because their bodies are still developing. Thats why USA TODAY worked with the researchers and scientists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, John Hopkins University in Baltimore, and the University of Maryland in College Park to analyze exposure to industrial pollution at schools across the nation. The goal: to determine what sort of toxic chemicals children breathe when they go to school.

See website: <http://content.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/smoke-stack/index>

Also the following EPA document lists the most common and hazardous VOC's coming off OSB plants, they list: acetaldehyde, acrolein, formaldehyde, methanol, phenol, and propionaldehyde.

See website: <http://www.epa.gov/EPA-AIR/2004/July/Days/30/a6298a.htm>

In conclusion, it does not appear that Minister Struthers will be allowing the CEC public meeting on July 28 and 29 to be a public hearing. However, we urge you, citizens of the Swan Valley, to consider the information you have just read and attend the public meeting to express your opinions and concerns to the members of the CEC panel who have travelled to Swan River to hear what you have to say.

**Joe Eichler
Iris Jonsson
Margaret Romak
Ken Sigurdson
Dan Soprovich**