

Testimony in Opposition to Pembina Pipeline Project at Port of Portland

Mike Stanton, President, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 8

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Greetings, Mr. Chairman and members of the Planning and Sustainability Commission. My name is Mike Stanton, and I'm the president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 8, here in Portland. I speak on behalf of our 500 members, the vast majority of whom live here in Portland. I live downriver in Scappoose and have worked at the Port of Portland for many years as a mechanic. I repair equipment that's used to move cargo to, from and throughout the marine terminals. Thank you for considering my testimony on the Pembina Pipeline proposal.

On behalf of ILWU Local 8, I'm here to register our strong objection to the propane export proposal you're hearing about today. We understand that your main objective is to evaluate the zoning impacts of the proposal. We also know that zoning changes are being justified by the project's backers as necessary to bring jobs to the area. Longshore men and women have worked at all 30 West Coast ports since the 1930's, so we have seen hundreds of marine terminal project proposals come and go over the years, all sold to boards and commissions such as yours with the promise of jobs. It's important that we evaluate those claims with a critical eye in order to accept only those projects that are likely to have a positive impact on the community.

After reviewing the Pembina pipeline proposal and its pluses and minuses, we've come to the conclusion that this project has far more costs to the community than it does benefits.

My fellow longshore workers and I have decades of experience moving many different cargoes – including logs, grain, containers, automobiles, scrap metal, agricultural products, steel slabs, and bulk commodities like potash and soda ash. We are accustomed to handling hazardous cargoes and explosives as well. We know that different cargoes have inherent costs and different benefits. From a jobs standpoint, it's labor intensive cargoes that boost the local economy with wages. Propane, for all the risks that you're hearing about today from other citizens, does not measure up to cargoes that boost our local economy by requiring significant employment after the facility is built. Other than the initial construction of the storage and transfer facility, the transfer of the propane from trains to storage, and from storage to ship, will fail to provide many permanent jobs. We've concluded that the Pembina project's promise of jobs – other than a short initial construction burst – is simply false.

More importantly, given that the rail capacity is already limited and congested in the Portland Fulton area, adding the number of weekly propane unit trains that is envisioned to the area would negatively impact incumbent businesses that rely on timely rail delivery. The railroad makes more money from energy trains and gives them priority over other cargoes. That, coupled with track bottlenecks and congestion already apparent in the system, means other cargoes will be squeezed out. Incumbent businesses that will be impacted include, but are not limited to, Columbia Grain, Portland Bulk, ICTSI, Kinder Morgan and Northwest Container.

Port property belongs to the public, and it's in very limited supply. As our city grows in the coming years and decades, we need to ensure that every acre of land and every foot of rail capacity is used to the best possible public benefit. Propane exports squander the port's potential by squeezing out rail capacity for other cargoes. And it will have far-reaching impacts even beyond in areas such as Oregon agriculture. Intermodal rail will be squeezed, thus impacting import container discretionary cargo. Since import discretionary container cargo drives exports, the Oregon agricultural community would find its gateway for exports impacted.

For these reasons and others that you're hearing about today, the 500 men and women of ILWU Local 8 urge you to recommend rejecting the zoning modification. Propane exports are simply not the best use of our public port property, and should not be allowed to stand in the way of better projects.

Again, I want to thank you for hearing my testimony today.