

TESTIMONY

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission Hearing

April 7, 2015

Rev. Dr. Marilyn Sewell, Minister Emerita, First Unitarian Church

My name is Marilyn Sewell, and I am the Minister Emerita of the First Unitarian Church, a congregation of some 1,600 members here in Portland. Many of the members of my church are activists and will support my message this afternoon.

In short, climate change is the most significant moral issue of our day. The job of every concerned citizen is keeping fossil fuels in the ground, period. Pembina is seeking to use our port facilities to export propane, selling it as a "clean and safe alternative." It is, in fact, neither clean nor safe, for it is created by fracking, a damaging extraction process.

So Portland, recently given the title of "Climate Champion" by the White House, is asked to provide infrastructure that would massively increase our carbon footprint? What's wrong with this picture?

I want to address the members of the Planning and Sustainability Commission directly and personally. I would ask you to note who is testifying for the code changes and who is testifying against. Virtually everyone testifying in favor will in some way profit from Pembina's presence. It's all about money. On the other hand, those testifying against are citizens who have no personal interest or profit motive—they simply care about the planet. They care about the dried up farm land in California and the stripping of the water table there; they care about the wildfires out west; they care about the increases in deadly storms; they care that the people who will suffer the most are those who typically have the least voice to protest.

So I ask the Commission members—who is speaking for justice and the moral good today, and who is speaking for short-term profit? Your choice is clear. You can become global warming enablers, or you can do the right thing and say no to the proposed code changes. How do you want to be remembered for the decision you will make? What will you say to your children and grandchildren when they ask you a few years down the pike, "Where did you stand when the world starting burning? How did you use your power to make a difference?"