

Rachel Thunder's Testimony to the MN Senate Capital Investments Committee on April 4, 2023.

Tansi kinanaskimotin ninanskimotiin

Hello My name is Rachel Thunder, I am Plains Cree First Nations and with the American Indian Movement and Indigenous Protectors Movement.

Thank you to Chair Pappas and members of the Capital Investments Committee for hearing our bill. I also want to thank Senator Fateh for carrying this bill and for the community members who are here in support today that I would ask to stand up so that we can acknowledge them.

This bill that is before you not only would be momentous for the state of Minnesota in urban ecological restoration, creating green jobs for Minnesotans, and combating environmental racism; but this bill would also set a national precedent for urban land back initiatives.

The roof depot warehouse in East Phillips sits on arsenic contaminated soil. The city of Minneapolis's plan of demolition of the warehouse would not only expose south Minneapolis to a toxic plume of arsenic, but would also see the addition of a city works diesel truck yard of up to 888 vehicles brought to our community. 83% of East Phillips residents are BIPOC and 32% live below the poverty line. State and local government data shows that people living in the neighborhood are disproportionately impacted by pollution in Minnesota. East Phillips contains a former federal superfund site and is a state-declared environmental justice area. Fine particles from air pollution contributed to deaths of adults 25 and over at a 37% higher rate than seen on average in the metro, according to the Minnesota Department of Health.

To combat the ecological and economic distress our community faces, this bill would allow an alternative to the city's proposed plan. Our initiative would not only prevent arsenic exposure but it would create affordable housing for 188 residents, generate an estimated 570 jobs, provide the city and state more than \$3.6M tax revenue, and provide incubator spaces for small businesses. Our plan exemplifies the broader bills aspirations of agriculture, employment and economic development and Minnesota Housing Finance and redevelopment.

As Indigenous people, we have cared for this land for thousands of years and now as your constituents we ask that you do what the city of Minneapolis has failed to do. To provide and reaffirm that our people, our communities, our relatives, the plants and the animals, and all human beings (including yourselves) have the right to clean water, clean air, and self determination.

This initiative is small business and community led, having raised \$10M in private investments as well as identified more \$9.7M in eligible grant opportunities to fund this project. This community project and development requires state funding and intervention because three times the city of Minneapolis has denied our communities the right to free enterprise by raising the price of the roof Depot site from \$5.7 million to now \$15 million over an 8 year period of time. If we had been supported in our initiative, the East Phillips community would have already generated an estimated \$159M in direct and indirect income as a result of green jobs in our initiative to the state of Minnesota over the past three years alone.

Sitting before you is an opportunity to right the wrongs of environmental injustice and racism our people have endured. An opportunity to choose the people, the communities, and the earth over further toxic pollution, poisoning future generations, and hindering the economic development and growth of Minnesotan communities.