

**BEFORE THE MINNESOTA  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS**  
100 Washington Square, Suite 1700  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401-2138

**FOR THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
121 Seventh Place East Suite 350  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2147

In the Matter of the Application of Minnesota  
Pipe Line Company for a Routing Permit for a  
Crude Oil Pipeline

MPUC Docket No. PL-5/PPL-05-2003  
OAH Docket No. 15-2500-17136-2

**AFFIDAVIT OF LINDY BANNISTER**

LINDY BANNISTER, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I am the General Manager of the Wedge Co-op located at 2105 Lyndale South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55405. I am the store leader at the Wedge and also the manager of the Co-op Partners Warehouse, a certified organic produce warehouse that supplies other co-operatives, groceries and restaurants in the Twin Cities area with certified organic produce. The Wedge Co-op was founded in 1974 as a co-operative grocery store, and we became the first certified organic store in Minnesota in October 2002. We are a big business by co-op standards, at 11,000 square feet and over \$20 million a year in sales. We have approximately 2,700 customers per day, or about 983,000 a year. Selling healthy foods from local suppliers is a critical part of our mission. It is also a critical part of our appeal to our customers.

2. I learned from Atina and Martin Diffley recently that the Minnesota Pipe Line Company is proposing to route a crude oil pipeline across their Gardens of Eagan certified organic farm in Eureka Township. I am submitting this affidavit on behalf of the Wedge Co-op and our customers in support of the request by Atina and Martin that an alternative route be selected that avoids their certified organic farm and that conditions be set so that the crude oil pipeline doesn't harm organic farms and farms that provide specialty produce to local markets. It would be a huge loss to Gardens of Eagan, to local co-ops and groceries and to other organic farmers if this pipeline, which could go someplace else, were to destroy Atina and Martin's unique organic farm.

3. Gardens of Eagan is probably our biggest volume supplier to the Wedge and the Co-op Partners Warehouse. They are a rock solid and reliable producer of high quality products and supply a significant amount of our fresh produce. We have been doing business with Atina and Martin since before we moved our

store to Lyndale, more than 27 years ago. Their partnership with us in supplying organic produce is important to us personally and as business people.

4. Gardens of Eagan produce is readily identifiable to customers in our store. We do a signage program with pictures of the farm near the bins. When the dinosaur kale comes in, we have a photo of Atina holding the kale near the produce. Customers will ask by name for Gardens of Eagan kale or sweet corn and ask us if the crop has come in yet. Gardens of Eagan produce is part of the reason that customers come to our store. Having this high quality, name-brand local produce is part of what makes customers choose to shop in our store. If Gardens of Eagan produce were not available, the Wedge and other Twin Cities co-ops would suffer real financial losses.

5. Our customers care about the source of their product and the values of purity and health associated with certified organic products. Produce that was lower in quality would not be marketable. If our customers knew of the presence of a crude oil pipeline across an organic farm, even this perception could taint the brand name and reduce the appeal of produce from the farm. We have put a sign up in our store describing the pipeline's proposed route across the Gardens of Eagan. When customers see it, they are visibly upset and tell us that it would be awful if the route goes through.

6. The effects at the Wedge and in the Twin Cities local organic food market of harm to Gardens of Eagan go far beyond financial losses. Gardens of Eagan is not replaceable – Atina and Martin bring a passion for organic farming, a connection to our customers and a link to other organic farming that is critical to our mission and the health of our co-op. If we were to lose Gardens of Eagan, we couldn't fulfill the needs of our customers.

7. I am also concerned about the message to other small, local organic farmers if a crude oil pipeline is allowed to cut across Atina and Martin's farm. Martin and Atina are seen as the leaders in the local organic farming community. At a recent Midwest Organic Conference in LaCrosse the role that they play in supporting the organic farming community was obvious. Other farmers kept coming to them for help, advice and mentoring. It would be a profound and awful defeat for organic farming that could have spillover effects for other growers; if Atina and Martin can't make it, it would seem that no one could survive the pressures on organic farming and make a sustainable living.

8. It is also important to protect the local organic food supply. Before coming to work for the Wedge, I spent 22 years in the conventional grocery business. Anyone familiar with the industry can see that conventional grocery stores are shifting to provide more organic produce. The possibility that this trend and the loss of local organic farmers will disrupt the supply chain so that co-ops can't buy sufficient local organic produce is very real.

9. We need to make sure that local organic farming is sustainable in the future to provide healthy food and retain our connection with the food we eat.

Further your affiant sayeth not.

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LINDY BANNISTER

Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_ day of May, 2006.

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Notary Public

My Commission expires: