

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting
British Columbia's Community Water
Supply Sources

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The B.C. Tap Water Alliance and the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC) Press Release

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GROUPS CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT DRINKING WATERSHEDS AND CREATE WATERSHED RESERVES

Vancouver - Over 20 provincial groups are asking the BC government and elected representatives to introduce legislation which will fully protect BC's surface-fed drinking watersheds from resource development. The groups' concerns, highlighted in an initial petition, are being raised during the government's 9th public consultation meeting in Vancouver on protecting drinking water sources. The consultation process is intended to lead to the introduction of legislation in the next legislative session. A final consultation is scheduled for Kamloops on February 15.

"These groups, and many others waiting to sign on, are advocating ongoing requests for protection made to the government by the BC Tap Water Alliance and SPEC," said Will Koop, SPEC watershed campaigner. "The creation of Watershed Reserves through provincial legislation for full protection from land use activities is the only mechanism that can bring about meaningful change for the public's long term health and confidence."

Because of considerable public concern and criticism about extensive logging and at least 200 related landslides in two drinking watersheds in the Sunshine Coast since the early 1970s, the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) held a public referendum in 1998 where 88% of voting residents opposed future logging or other resource uses in drinking water sources. The SCRD then petitioned the provincial government to be granted legislative authority over their watershed lands to protect them from future resource activities. Current Forests Minister Gordon Wilson, MLA for the Powell River/Sunshine Coast, recently told a public forum in Roberts Creek that "the community (of the SCRD) would soon have control over the Chapman (and Gray) Creek watershed(s)."

"Wilson has a golden opportunity to show good faith and create legislated Watershed Reserves beginning with the SCRD's two drinking watersheds," said Koop. "Watershed Reserve legislation has been in existence for a century, but was ignored and covered up by resource extraction interests. Road building, logging, mining and grazing are inappropriate in drinking watersheds. These activities have impaired hundreds of watersheds, and have been under continual public criticism for decades. If the residents of Victoria and Vancouver benefit by the protection of their drinking water sources, so should all British Columbians."