

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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Supply Sources

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FORESTS MINISTER DE JONG CONSPIRES AGAINST SUNSHINE COAST COMMUNITY AND SECHELT FIRST NATION ACCORD TO INCLUDE DRINKING WATERSHED RESERVES IN SO-CALLED “COMMUNITY” FOREST LICENSE

Vancouver – On Tuesday April 19, 2005, Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) community association representatives and residents packed a meeting room in Sechelt to denounce plans by Sechelt District Mayor Cam Reid and forestry consultant and Sunshine Coast Forest Coalition chairman Kevin Davie to include the SCRCD's Watershed Reserves in a Community Forest License proposal to the government. Mayor Reid, elected in late 2002, is a former RCMP Detachment Chief, a BC Liberal Party third runner up in the 1996 provincial election, and presently the financial advisor for the BC Liberal Sunshine Coast candidate.

Following a SCRCD referendum in May 1998, where 88 percent of voters rejected future logging and gravel mining in the Chapman and Gray Creek Reserves, the former NDP Minister of Forests Gordon Wilson recommended the SCRCD and the Sechelt Indian Government sign an Accord to protect the Reserves, which the provincial government would then honor. The Accord was reached in 2002. What's more, over five thousand SCRCD residents signed a related Petition personally handed to BC Liberal Sunshine Coast MLA Herald Long in Victoria on May 22, 2002, which he then tabled in the Legislature.

When Interfor withdrew from the two Watershed Reserves in May 2003 (due to strong consistent public opposition), government encouraged industry foresters and the District of Sechelt to apply for a Community Forest License. The District sought partnerships for the tenure application with the Sechelt Indian Government and the Sunshine Coast Forest Coalition. It is alleged that the controversial Watershed Reserves were later included in the “Community” Forest proposal without the knowledge and consent of the Sechelt Band or the SCRCD. As a result, the Sechelt Band on March 14, 2005 informed Mayor Reid, “We cannot offer our support for the Sunshine Coast's community forest plan.” According to Sechelt Forest District Manager Greg Hemphill (quoted by a reporter at the April 19 public meeting) this conspiracy originated with the Minister of Forests: “There was a direct invitation to the District of Sechelt. The minister has already tipped his hand that he would like the District of Sechelt to get a community forest. They're well aware of the history down here.”

“I was at the April 19th public meeting in Sechelt. The District Manager and the Mayor of Sechelt brazenly ignored the public,” said Will Koop, Tap Water Alliance Coordinator. “On that same first day of election campaigning Premier Campbell invited British Columbians to “move forward” with his Party. From our perspective we are clearly “moving backward”. Since this government was elected in May 2001, we have witnessed a continuing provincial strategy to collectively force communities to log, mine and allow domestic cattle grazing in their drinking watersheds. We need to legislatively protect our drinking water sources. That requires strong leadership from government, not more secret strategies and conspiratorial plans.”

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