

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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

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UNION OF BC MUNICIPALITIES EMERGENCY RESOLUTION (B-65) ONCE AGAIN “URGES” CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT BC’s DRINKING WATERSHEDS

Vancouver - On Friday morning September 23, 2004, the last day of the Union of BC Municipalities’ (UBCM’s) annual conference in Kelowna, delegates from the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) brought an emergency resolution to the floor, where members agreed to have it tabled. Between 80-90 percent of the delegates in attendance voted in favour of the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has not acted to grant management authority to legally constituted water purveyors over community watersheds used for potable water as recommended by UBCM resolution B65 (1998); **AND WHEREAS** there are continuing conflicts of use within community watersheds used for potable water all over British Columbia as exemplified by the pending sand and gravel extraction application in Chapman Creek Community Watershed that serves approximately 21,000 Sunshine Coast residents; **AND WHEREAS** the local purveyor of water and therefore the local ratepayer bear all the long term financial liability for water treatment and for maintaining water supply; **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Union of BC Municipalities urge the British Columbia Provincial Government to enact legislation that empowers local government water purveyors to protect the community watersheds used for potable water.

Two other resolutions, B-84 and B-85, concerning the proposed privatization of Crown lease lots in drinking water sources and detailed assessments of proposed recreational leases in drinking sources, were also voted on at the conference. In the past, the UBCM has passed numerous resolutions on the protection of the public’s drinking sources on both Crown (Public) and private lands, none of which have been acted on by successive provincial administrations.

“How long can our provincial Parliament continue to stonewall the public about what is evidently a growing legacy of contempt for BC communities’ right to clean drinking water?” asks Will Koop, BC Tap Water Alliance Coordinator. “In particular, despite the SCRD’s May 2, 1998 referendum where 88 percent of those voting were against future logging and mining, despite a 5,000 signature petition by SCRD residents handed to Liberal MLA Harold Long and in turn to the Legislature, despite the numerous pleas of the SCRD since 1972, and despite the SCRD’s 1992 Supreme Court case that was settled out of Court, our government still completely ignores the wishes of the public. What’s more, those wishes are based on good science as confirmed by the long list of studies that have been undertaken in the watershed since 1972. Instead, government has allowed a private aggregate company to apply for mining rights in the Chapman Watershed Reserve, and there are plenty of indications afoot that the Ministry of Forests may grant a controversial Community Forest Tenure that includes the SCRD’s drinking watersheds. This same offer has already been rejected by the SCRD as unworkable because of their mandate for community water supply. It appears that government’s underhanded attempts to rid itself of the mess it has created may stem from the fear that the protection of Chapman Creek, although completely warranted, will set another “unwanted” precedent in the Province. We need to elect politicians who will finally stop this madness and fully enforce legislation that protects BC’s community drinking water sources.”

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For more information, contact Will Koop (email, info@bctwa.org). *For a list of UBCM resolutions passed (1971-2004) on the protection of drinking water, see our website for the Backgrounder, under Press Releases.*