

Dear Editor,

Brent Richter's article "Community Forest puts numbers on the table" (Coast Reporter, September 4, 2009) is enormously interesting. John Henderson, the newly elected chair of Sechelt Community Projects Incorporated (SCPI), states in this article that all reasonable questions about the community forest will be answered and advises that use of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests is unnecessary. I disagree; citizen use of FOI legislation is effective and strongly influences governments and public bodies to function in an open and accountable way.

Last June the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) made an FOI request to SCPI asking for details about various items including benefits paid to staff, employees and directors. Mr. Henderson answered on August 14 stating, among other things, that SCPI has no staff or employees and that the management of the community forest is provided entirely through one contract with Anik Consultants Limited which is owned by Kevin Davie, the "operations manager". A copy of the contract was provided with its fee schedule blacked out. The value of this 4-year contract is apparently over \$1,000,000. We have no choice but to ask the FOI Commissioner to review Mr. Henderson's response.

The community forest (SCPI) is a "public body" under the FOI Act. It receives a public subsidy and has taxpayer supported access to financing. We know from our FOI request that the community forest let a contract worth approximately a million dollars to a private company without a public tendering process and that sub-contracts are also being let without public tendering. While Mr. Henderson's intentions may be laudable, I still encourage the Coast Reporter and its readers to use the Freedom of Information system and help bring the facts about the community forest out into the light of day.

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