

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No 'Community' in Sechelt's Community Forest Application

April 22, 2005

Sechelt, BC. – In a crowded public meeting on April 19 in Sechelt, an overwhelming number of community organizations and residents voiced their continued opposition and frustration with the District of Sechelt's application for a community forest licence. The controversial application, only released to the public after it submitted to the Ministry of Forests, proposes logging in the Sunshine Coast's drinking watersheds despite a repeated call by community associations, the Regional District and the Sechelt Nation to remove the watersheds from the application.

Of the Sunshine Coast's 30,000 residents, 23,000 are dependent on the Chapman/Gray Community Watersheds, including the 6,000 residents of the District of Sechelt. "Clearly the District of Sechelt is not interested in what the community has to say about their own so-called community forest" said Dan Bouman, Executive Director of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA). "Community Forestry could be a great opportunity for the Sunshine Coast. It is very troubling to see how a few individuals at the District of Sechelt and the Ministry of Forests are trying to exploit the idea of community forestry merely to gain industrial access to controversial areas, like our drinking watersheds" added Bouman.

According to Kevin Davie, the coordinator of the District of Sechelt's application, the strategy used in developing the application was to "maintain a low profile" and involved closed-door meetings with BC Liberal MLA Harold Long and Minister of Forests Mike de Jong to ensure success. Davie explains that this low-profile strategy aims to "build community support from the silent majority". Davie and the Mayor of Sechelt, Cam Reid, are both well known BC Liberal Party supporters.

Low-profile closed-door approaches to developing a community forest application are completely inconsistent with the Ministry of Forest requirements which state that applicants "must contain proof that there is a high level of community awareness of the application and strong support for the application from a broad cross-section of the community." Similarly, the BC Community Forest Association's guidebook states: "Community participation is the cornerstone of community forestry" and that "behind closed doors—back room deals are not acceptable".

The SCCA plans to voice their concerns to the BC Community Forestry Association who are holding their AGM this weekend in Creston. "The District of Sechelt's closed-door approach and unwillingness to listen to the public flies in the face of the core principles of community forestry and raises serious concerns about how the BC Liberal government is awarding new community forest tenures", said Jay Forsyth, forest policy researcher and Director of the SCCA. "The issue of informed public consultation, especially with local First Nations, is critical for everyone in BC who sees community forestry as a fair and just alternative to industrial forestry practices," added Forsyth.

For more information contact:

Dan Bouman, SCCA Executive Director, 604-886-8325

Jay Forsyth, Director and Chair, SCCA Community Forest Committee 604-626-8020

Please visit our website HYPERLINK <http://www.thescca.ca> www.thescca.ca for a point by point evaluation of the District of Sechelt's CFPA application.

PO BOX 1969, SECHELT, BC V0N 3A0
HYPERLINK "http://www.thescca.ca" www.thescca.ca