

MEDIA RELEASE

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CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT FAILS TO LEAD ON WATER SAFETY
-Local Board of Health curtails watershed logging activities-

VICTORIA – The Campbell government has failed to protect the safety of drinking water in the Sunshine Coast, leaving the local regional district to fill the leadership vacuum, New Democrat MLA Nicholas Simons says.

In an unprecedented move, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, acting as a local board of health, issued a Health Act Order against Western Forest Products (WFP) restricting the forest company's harvesting plans in the Chapman Creek, the Sunshine Coast's principle drinking watershed.

“This has never before happened in British Columbia. But regional authorities had no choice once it was determined that a possible health hazard, as defined by the Health Act, existed,” said Simons, the MLA for Powell River – Sunshine Coast.

The public learned of the company's harvesting plans in early June. A public meeting June 20 attracted a large crowd to the Roberts Creek Hall as the latest instalment of the community's decades-old battle to protect the Chapman Creek drinking water. “This is not a battle we can imagine losing,” Simons told the crowd. “In this day and age, we should know better.”

The Ministry of Forests had granted WFP four cutting approvals in the Chapman Creek watershed despite studies indicating a risk to the water source, and over the concerns of the Regional District - the purveyor of water - and despite the Chapman Creek's designation as a Watershed Reserve.

“Under the Campbell government's weakened legislation the Ministry of Forests was required to approve activities that the Local Board of Health subsequently determined to be a health hazard. It's up to individuals and local governments to protect the public interest because this government is busy protecting big business.”

“We need a legislative solution to protect our source areas of drinking water. It is an incredibly valuable public asset that British Columbia needs to respect and protect,” said Simons.

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