

Consultant picked for community forest license

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Council has voted to retain DRH Consulting to complete a community forest license for the City of Port Alberni.

In February, council hired the firm to perform a viability study, at a cost of \$18,300, of a total proposal of \$47,313 to complete the entire package. Last week, the community forest advisory committee met to review the initial study.

The committee expressed its concerns over provincial forest minister Rich Coleman's May 25 comments concerning changes to regulations for harvesting old growth forest.

The city will now write the minister calling for clarification, although Mayor Ken McRae said it's a non-issue.

"I spoke with the minister, and he assured me it's not going to have any effect on our operation," McRae said.

The city will also write to Ministry of Forests district manager Trish Balcaen, indicating acceptance of the land base currently offered for the community forest, which is located in Sproat Lake electoral area. On that note, Sproat Lake regional director Penny Cote will be invited to join the community forest advisory committee.

The city will now press the ministry to live up to its original offer of a community forest with an annual allowable cut (AAC) of 22,000 cubic metres per year.

That offer was made in July, 2004, by then-forest minister Mike de Jong.

More recently, in October, 2006, Balcaen advised that a harvesting area had been selected, indicating "a potential AAC of approximately 18,688 cubic metres a year and a long-term harvest level of 21,263 cubic metres per year."

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