

To Salt Spring Island Trustees

We would like to thank you for the effort and time which you put into being a Trustee which usually goes unnoticed. Without people like you, our community would be a lesser place.

We are writing to voice our strong opposition to establishing a new Trust Policy in the manner that has been put forward. While only a First Reading of the Policy is being presented, we feel that the process is flawed and that there should be no First Reading at all at this time. We urge you to stop the First Reading on the new Policy proposals to enable:

- a more comprehensive review of the process for Policy change;
- the provision for reasonable public input to determine the Policy changes to be considered for Policy proposals; and
- the establishment of a weighted value system of the importance of each of the Policy proposals.

To-date, this has not happened. Most Salt Springers are not fully aware of the impact and complexity of the Policy proposals, let alone having been afforded the reasonable opportunity to be a part of the Policy process. By this approach, the process and Policy can only be perceived as being determined unfairly or resulting in unintended consequences.

We, the public, were not a part of the new Policy process or the identity of its problems. We realize that the Trust feels that it made a substantial effort to communicate to the public and seek our input. Obviously, from the reaction of the community, the Trust did not get through to us. We are at the First Reading stage to determine what problems we would like to consider and how to fix them but without having a well thought out discussion as to what problems require fixing or consideration of the various recommended options to solving these problems. It is our view that new Policy should even not be considered until the community is fully involved in the recognition and analysis of the problems.

There also needs to be a balance of the means to create solutions for the problems, otherwise what may seem like a good new Policy often erases, or partially erases, another potentially good old or new Policy. Policy change has a long term impact and each change affects the very delicate balance of the community in which we live and the businesses and tourism that support that community by creating jobs which support people who require affordable housing. Delicate balances are often unintentionally upset. If we create an economic imbalance by Policy change, we may lessen the need for affordable housing by affecting the jobs and income of those same people who were dependent on our economy – an unintended consequence.

Change can often occur through education and co-operation with other resources already in place, instead of adopting what may be viewed as more threatening Policy. On the other hand, we may also have existing Policy which should be eliminated.

There is no policy (that we could find) being considered for the Trust to adopt the provincially approved Fire-Smart program. And no real mention of the pollution created from activities on lands where the Trust has control over land use. The Policy document seems to emphasize Policy changes which most of the public may accept – some of which do not impact the majority of the Islanders. It is easy for us to vote no to private docks if we do not own waterfront property – until the day comes when we need to evacuate the island because of a fire threat and realize that we eliminated docks which were essential to our safety and survival.

To provide another extreme example to make a point, we notice that the elimination of commonly used laundry detergent is not even considered in the new Policy proposals. Everyday detergents are one of the primary sources of chemical pollution found in water supplies today. No policy is being considered for something quite serious yet other minor Policy change issues present themselves.

The discussion of Policy proposals and the process established for their review has not been fair to Salt Springers. While we were faced with extreme abnormal times during Covid, the Trust prepared the Policy proposals without a full and reasonable input from the community. The Trust Offices were not open to us and there were no town halls or their meetings feedback to alert us of what may lie ahead to enable us to voice our disagreement or otherwise. It should not be expected for us to rely on social media and searching of the Trust's website to be informed. It is incumbent on our elected officials to present to the public the details of such a major topic of importance to allow for a fair and transparent establishment of the process before any Policy proposals take place. This has not happened. It is not too late to say, the public needs to provide considerably more input into the Policy process to avoid the obvious confusion to-date and to be viewed as open and fair. To propose a First Reading when the public has little, or no knowledge, of how we got to a First Reading is not conducive to trusting the Trust or expecting that our feedback will be favourably received. We find it interesting that feedback on the Policy proposals from the community is being sought when the community really was not a part of providing much input in the Policy proposals. It is not too late to change our ways.

At the time of writing this letter, a poll in the Driftwood asks:

Do you feel Islands Trust Council will heed public Policy Statement feedback?

“NO” is the response of 86% of the community. Although the sample size is small, it is not far from ideal to be relied upon, particularly with a huge 86% negative vote.

Such a dramatic response demonstrates a general lack of understanding, education, or mistrust of what has transpired to-date. This should not be the case. As our elected officials, we feel it is incumbent upon you to see the signs of a problem and right this wrong before a First Reading.

Peter and Karen Dorazio June 27, 2021