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To: Islands2050
Subject: Comments - Islands Trust Revised Policy Statement

Non-Support for Islands Trust 2050 Revised Policy Statement

I am a long-term resident of Pender Island (part-time 1969-2006 and full-time 2007-2022). I began working as a planning technician in 1971 and as a professional planner in 1991 until I retired in 2007.

Public Engagement Process

Due to my background, I have always tried to keep informed about planning issues within my community, so I was shocked to discover in June 2021 that there was a significant review of the Islands Trust Policy Statement underway and that Bylaw #183 was being proposed for 1st Reading. I attended (online) the information and town hall meeting on July 7, 2021 where Council heard numerous speakers state that the bylaw should not proceed to 1st Reading. Subsequent to this meeting, Council decided not to proceed to 1st Reading of the Bylaw. Also, after hearing that many people felt there was insufficient public engagement, Council decided to extend the engagement process.

During the most recent phase of public engagement, I have attended a Q&A session (online), a workshop (online) and an in-person event held on Pender Island. I also completed the policy statement survey. The engagement process did not meet my needs in terms of clarifying the basis for or purpose of many of the policies or the means by which they might be implemented. Furthermore, I found the format of the online sessions challenging to navigate and participate, although I am experienced with using Zoom and other online meeting platforms.

I also found the survey to be overly complicated and for many questions I had to note that I was unable to agree or disagree with the statements because they were unclear or incorporated too many scenarios.

Revised Policy Statement

1. Expansion of the Islands Trust Mandate

The Islands Trust is already a costly government body and the property owners of the Islands bear most of that cost. Taxpayers have noted their concerns about cost increases and many of the policies, especially those related to an expanded mandate, would lead to further costs for greater regulation and more staffing.

The revised policy statement should not expand the Islands Trust mandate to cover work that is already the responsibility of other levels of government.

2. Sustainable and Resilient Communities

The revised policy statement focuses on the objective of climate change and preserving the islands for the good of the larger community (ie, First Nations, BC residents, etc.) without giving adequate consideration to the needs and aspirations of the local communities that live and work on the islands. The focus should emphasize creating communities that are sustainable in all regards (environment, economic, social, etc.) and resilient to change.

3. Specific Policies

Trees - Policies related to the preservation/retention of existing trees (Tree Removal Bylaw, etc.) do not give adequate consideration to fire safety and viable livelihoods. Furthermore, tree bylaws would be an expensive mechanisms to monitor and address tree preservation, especially in our largely rural type environments. I do not support introducing a Tree Removal Bylaw.

Agriculture - Many in our island community (North Pender) have embraced the return of agricultural pursuits and the opportunities that they provide for the local population (local food and support for home gardening). However,

agriculture has faced ongoing challenges due to rising costs (fuel, feed, etc.) and the Islands Trust policies should be nurturing these activities, rather than placing additional roadblocks to their success. I do not support policies that prevent or harm agricultural activities.

Coastal & Marine - Various levels of government oversee coastal and marine environments, and it should be the responsibility of the Islands Trust to advance their concerns to the other government agencies rather than take these on themselves. The Islands Trust shouldn't be expanding their own authority. I also question the banning of docks when there are many property owners that consider their docks as potentially their only means off the island in case of emergency. In a sense, banning docks seems a knee-jerk reaction that penalizes the properties that have preserved their shoreline. I do not support the banning of docks.

Groundwater - most people in the islands rely on water bodies (such as lakes and ponds) or wells (groundwater) for their water source. Instead of banning other water sources such as desalination, the Islands Trust should be encouraging alternative methods of water collection such as rainwater retention or desalination methods that address environmental concerns. Conservation methods should also be emphasized.

Affordable Housing - This is an issue faced by numerous people on the islands and often results in on-going problems for local businesses and their employees. Although the Islands Trust says that affordable housing is needed, the onerous, prescriptive nature of many of the proposed policies will likely make it difficult to achieve.

4. Governance and Management

The recently released consultant's study, regarding the Islands Trust governance and management, raises numerous issues that should be addressed before finalizing revisions to the policy statements.

Thank you for taking my comments into consideration.

Lynda Challis