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**Subject:** Islands 2050 Policy Statement Comments

Dear Members of the Islands Trust Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Islands 2050 Policy Statement. We want to express our support for the Islands Trust and its original mandate to preserve and protect the unique environment and communities of the Trust Area. This mandate has served the islands well for decades, and we value the Trust's role in stewarding these special places. We also understand that the current Policy Statement is 30 years old, and it is timely to review and update it.

At the same time, we are concerned with the draft Policy Statement. It proposes sweeping changes based on a narrow set of guiding themes, and many of these changes extend beyond the traditional scope of the Islands Trust. More importantly, the public has had minimal opportunity to understand or respond to these proposals. We only learned of the consultation recently, and many others are in the same position. Furthermore, we understand that the first reading was in July 2025 and that the draft has been in motion since 2019 without broader notification and more time for meaningful engagement.

We filled out the survey ( after finding out about it 3 days before it closed), but wanted to provide more detailed feedback than the survey allowed for:

### **1. Co-Governance and Decision-Making**

The draft introduces co-governance with Indigenous Governing Bodies but does not explain how this would function in practice. Clear roles, limits, accountability, and final decision-making authority are essential. Residents and property owners need to understand how decisions will be made and how their rights may be affected.

### **2. Mandatory Engagement and Knowledge Holders**

Requiring mandatory engagement and reliance on Indigenous Knowledge Holders raises questions about consistency, transparency, and documentation. Land-use decisions must be grounded in clear, verifiable information. Guidance on how this knowledge will be gathered, assessed, and balanced with existing planning and historical records would strengthen confidence in the process.

### **3. Cultural Monitors**

Requiring cultural monitors for ground-disturbing activities may be impractical for small residential projects and could lead to increased costs and delays. Availability, coordination, and funding need careful consideration before this becomes policy.

### **4. Docks, Foreshore, and Marine Access**

Expanded direction on docks and foreshore use risks overlapping with existing federal, provincial, and local regulations. The Trust should avoid creating uncertainty where established

frameworks already exist and ensure that historical rights and agreements of private property owners are respected.

#### **5. Private Property Rights and Certainty**

Several sections of the draft blur the line between advisory policy and regulatory authority. Property owners need predictability. Clear boundaries and explicit grandfathering of existing rights are essential to avoid unintended impacts on long-standing properties.

#### **6. Public Access to Lands and Waters**

The draft includes broad language that could affect public access to lands, foreshores, and waterways. Stronger clarity is needed on how public access will be maintained if new, protected, or culturally significant areas are designated.

#### **7. Notification and Survey Design**

Given the significance of the proposed changes, the public should have been more broadly notified and given more time to respond. The survey design also limits the ability to provide meaningful feedback, as several questions combine multiple concepts into single responses.

#### **8. Glossary Language**

Language should be neutral, transparent, and respectful of today's property owners. A more balanced tone would help build Trust and support for the final document.

We support the Islands Trust's mission and many of the goals outlined in this review. However, the Policy Statement would benefit from further refinement to ensure clarity of governance, practical implementation, respect for private property rights, and certainty around public access. We also strongly encourage extending the consultation period so that more residents, property owners and the general public/taxpayers have a fair opportunity to participate.

Thank you for considering our comments. The final Policy Statement must reflect a balanced, collaborative approach that protects the islands while respecting the people who call them home.

Sincerely,

Susan and Noel Richardson

Generational family property owners on Pender and Gabriola Islands & Recreational boaters