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Sent: Friday, July 31, 2026 1:29 PM
To: northinfo <northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca>
Subject: Draft OCP

Dear Gabriola Trustees and planners

I read the hydrogeology report commissioned by IT, attended the session at which it was discussed, and have read the FAQs (which were very helpful), reviewed the draft OCP and attended the Gabriola talks session on water.

Notwithstanding all of that I have to confess to a certain unease given the data gaps. This a very complex and crucial resource to plan around and extrapolating from the study and date in order to make policy likely to be even more complex.

At the outset, I congratulate you on your efforts to engage the public on Gabriola regarding the OCP. I was critical of the engagement process for the TPS. I appreciate what you have done for the OCP.

Monitoring

What came out of the Gabriola Talks session (my take) was a general understanding that more data is needed. The need for additional data is identified in the Freshwater Footprint Report. This was taken further at the Gabriola Talks session as suggestions for mandatory monitoring of private wells, wells that support small businesses, and water being brought on to the island. While I agree more data is needed, I do not support *imposing* monitoring requirements on private wells. The cost of adoption of a standardizable reporting system makes it likely that voluntary uptake by existing owners is likely to be minimal. I query whether the IT has the ability to require owners of existing properties to install meters. Imposing metering as a condition of development/building permit will add cost and will provide limited, location-specific data from which little could be extrapolated for planning purposes.

In terms of imposing monitoring on businesses, small businesses owners are already burdened with a shocking number of reporting and regulatory requirements. I am strongly opposed to adding to that burden. **I would urge RDN, GTC and planners to try to obtain this information through governmental sources and additional monitoring wells.**

On a related point, it was disappointing to hear comments at the recent Gabriola talks regarding businesses supplying water on the island. Some residents appear to think that businesses of this nature are a threat to our water supply and should be stopped. I find this worrisome on two levels: this type of attitude does not assist in developing a cooperative/collaborative relationship with businesses providing an essential service to the island - something that I believe will be important going forward; and, it suggests a

fundamental lack of understanding of the predicament we are in on this island. To simply eliminate a source of water supply now would create enormous hardship. There are clearly many properties on this island that rely on water delivery. As such, the water supply businesses are responding to a demand that has resulted from increasing density, population growth and climate variations. Even if no one relied on water delivery for everyday use, these businesses would still be an essential service for emergency water needs. As such, I think it behooves the RDN, Gabriola trustees and planners to take this into account in planning and policy going forward and, importantly, to ensure that the need for this essential service is widely understood by educating the public. Much as many would like to be able to, we cannot go back in time. We need to deal with the island as it is and try to do no further harm. That includes not harming vulnerable owners and renters.

Density

Until there is a more complete understanding of the water demand relative to water availability situation - both current and on a long term forecast, I am not in favour of adding density, anywhere.

Mandatory Rainwater Catchment

As the FAQ for the Freshwater Footprint Study makes clear, rainwater is already part of the water budget for Gabriola. Catching it will not reduce pressure on water availability. It simply stops the rain from getting to the aquifer. Making catchment mandatory will increase building costs. I am not an expert and do not know if this is accurate, but someone at Gabriola Talks indicated that to fully supply water needs for two people per annum based on Gabriola's precipitation levels would require a 3000sq foot roof!

Even if that is not accurate, some calculation must be done to determine the cost-benefit of mandating rainwater catchment when 1) it does not increase Gabriola's water budget, 2) the systems are expensive to install and maintain and are out of service for not insignificant periods due to pollen, thereby affecting affordability and still result in periods of unavailability, 3) the catchment area may have to be so large as to affect the building design with unintended consequences (eg) much greater lot clearing to accommodate the systems.

Catchment for non-potable uses like gardens should be optional but encouraged. This is where strong educational programs are key.

Flex Housing

While our table at Gabriola Talks was supportive of flex housing as an idea, this was subject to caveats regarding all of the concerns mentioned above regarding Water, Density, Rainwater Catchment, building design effects on canopy, and importantly, septic. Once all of that is taken into account, it is difficult to imagine that such housing would be affordable

or that there would be many suitable locations that would allow for the housing to have a combination of water sources adequate to supply the maximum potential residents, and accommodate multiple dwellings and an effective septic system.

I am aware that other islands have allowed such housing. However, the unique characteristics and pressures of individual islands need to be taken into account when contemplating a similar development here. Because of its easy access to and from a growing urban center and the past and ongoing increasing pressures on limited water resources and freshwater recharge possibilities, Gabriola is at a different stage than most of the other islands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mary Collyer