

Transition Salt Spring
Delegation to the Islands Trust Council
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good afternoon. My name is Bryan Young. I am a director on the Transition Salt Spring board, past chair, and lead on our Advocacy Circle. I'm here with my colleague Pam Tarr.

Transition Salt Spring is a charitable non-profit organization whose paid staff and volunteers work to address climate action, ecosystem protection, and community resiliency through positive community supported initiatives. We have published two climate action plans, most recently in 2021. More information is available on our website.

I want to begin by acknowledging the tremendous work and integrity that has informed this draft: by staff, by Council, by Indigenous governments, and by island communities across the Trust Area.

This document matters greatly to our islands. It will shape what is buildable, what is protectable, and ultimately what remains viable on these islands over the next generation and during very challenging times.

Which brings me to climate.

Climate change is no longer one policy issue among many. **It is the governing condition under which the Trust's mandate to preserve and protect must now be interpreted.**

That is not an ideological claim. It's a planning reality with direct implications for public safety, infrastructure liability, and the Trust's duty of care.

Two decades ago, insured losses seldom passed \$500 million a year. Today, \$1 billion and up is the norm. The [Insurance Bureau of Canada](#) (IBC), not known as a radical group of climate activists, says that climate risks “demand that we fundamentally rethink how we build, plan and restore communities across our country... The best way to keep communities safe ...is to invest seriously in resilience now.”

And a reality check: In 2025 alone, insured damage caused by severe weather events exceeded \$2.4 billion. [Catastrophe Indices and Quantification Inc. (CatIQ)].

This concern is durable, it cuts across elections and it reflects evolving science and lived experience.

And most important, it aligns directly with the Trust’s responsibility to protect ecosystems -- and the human communities that depend on them.

The draft Trust Policy Statement makes important progress.

- The stronger integration of Indigenous rights and Reconciliation is real and meaningful.
- The clearer emphasis on growth management through intensification is essential.
- And the effort to distinguish directive from advisory policy is a step toward greater consistency.

In fact, Transition Salt Spring is already using this draft as a foundation for our upcoming submission on Salt Spring’s OCP update.

In our submission on the TPS we provide recommendations in seven areas. Today, I would like to focus on just a few key ones that warrant emphasis as you prepare to finalize and submit this critical document.

We were pleased to find climate change is discussed in parts of the draft TPS, but, climate is framed as one factor among many -- rather than as a threat multiplier that reshapes and will continue to reshape all other considerations.

- Water availability.
- Forest health.
- Hazard exposure.
- The long-term viability of housing and infrastructure.

These are **no longer separable domains**.

To that end – as you have rightly done with Indigenous rights and their inclusion in Trust Area planning in this draft – you also need to do with climate change.

Given the magnitude of the changes that will only multiply across the Trust Area in the coming decades, climate change is now the governing condition under which Trust Area planning must be undertaken.

To acknowledge and address these risks honestly and holistically, we have recommended adding a new Guiding Principle that properly frames "climate change as a pervasive and compounding risk" that must be incorporated in "all land-use planning and decision-making under this Policy Statement."

While this is an easy change to make, we want to underscore the challenge it represents to the organization and function of the Islands Trust.

Adequately responding to climate change in this TPS heightens a further risk the Trust faces in its implementation.

Local Trust Committees simply cannot carry this alone.

Without additional robust and centralized support, LTCs will be left to interpret and apply the TPS unevenly – let alone if a new climate change focussed principle is added – as it must be.

The result will not be resilience – but policy inconsistency, delay, timidity, insufficiency, all of which will increase risk exposure to the Trust, but also to the islands they are empowered to steward.

- Some islands will push ahead.
- Others will hesitate due to uncertainty.
- Staff time will continue to be consumed by approvals rather than the long-term planning we need to keep our islands safe.

Our submission argues that approving the TPS without a robust implementation plan would leave its most important ambitions completely unrealized.

I am not proposing yet more delays in this long process, or perfection.

Amongst the recommendations we make in our written submission, what's needed is a visible commitment by Trust Council to:

- First, develop and maintain shared and publicly available climate-risk information and tools,
- Second, establish publicly accessible ecosystem health indicators and regular reporting,
- and Third actively support Local Trust Committees in applying this policy consistently and defensibly.

We think that this is how you can make the TPS achievable, fair and impactful.

Before closing, I want to briefly acknowledge an enabling issue that underpins everything we discussed in our submission, that will also impinge

your ability to operationalize the new TPS. And that is the Trust's planning capacity.

On islands particularly like Salt Spring, and I imagine it's the same on Gabriola, our northern sister, planners are increasingly consumed by development approvals and day-to-day triage, rather than being resourced **and insulated from approvals triage** to do the long-range, strategic planning that today's climate conditions demand.

That current imbalance will make it harder to implement an ambitious Policy Statement.

Furthermore, strengthening the Trust's planning capacity and retaining top talent is essential to fulfilling the Trust's mandate. In practice, this would mean ensuring adequately compensated planners have the bandwidth to focus on long-term planning and proactive support for LTCs, rather than being locked into an approvals treadmill.

In closing, as it relates to the Trust Policy Statement before you, our message is simple.

This document has been consulted on extensively.
It reflects real learning.

And it comes at a moment when delay would not represent caution -- but avoidance.

Approving the TPS after careful consideration of extensive public input — including submissions from First Nations, government agencies, boards, and commissions — while pairing it with a clear, accountable implementation commitment will send a powerful signal.

It will say that the Islands Trust understands the scale of the challenge before it, and that it is prepared not just to set direction, but support LTCs in making the TPS real across the entire Trust Area.

With respect to the all-encompassing risks of the climate crisis, we will not succeed with cautious half-measures.

But we can respond effectively with clarity, resolve, and coordinated action that is clearly communicated to the electorate.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions you might have.