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The Islands Trust

THE POLICY OF THE ISLANDS TRUST

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THE POLICY OF THE ISLANDS TRUST

Preamble

The Islands Trust Area lies between the mainland of British Columbia and Vancouver Island and includes all the islands from the southern Gulf of Georgia to Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti on the north and Howe Sound on the east.

For many years a rural retreat for the discriminating few, the islands have now become increasingly desirable to many city-dwellers for retirement living and recreational pursuits. Few areas in Canada offer so many benefits as a place to live, work and play as do these islands. Their quiet beauty and tranquillity, however, is now being eroded by increased traffic and land development which is often insensitive to the special qualities of the islands' landscape. In addition, development is already causing water shortages, sewage disposal problems, increased need for fire protection services, schools, hospitals, ferry transportation, and other community services. Land values have sharply increased to the point where land acquisition is becoming available only to the relatively affluent, while a decrease in public access to upland and waterfront has taken place. Pressures of all kinds from a growing B.C. population and from tourists and visitors threaten the islands and their value to residents and visitors alike.

Trust Administration

The Islands Trust Act was passed by the B.C. Legislature in 1974. It requires that the Trust preserve and protect the unique amenities and environment of the islands, for the benefit of the residents of

the Trust area and of the Province generally. In short, the Act formally recognizes the special nature and character of the islands. An amendment to the Act in June 1975 permits the establishment of The Islands Trust Fund and grants authority to acquire and hold land in order to further carry out the objectives of the Trust.

The General Trust has jurisdiction over matters that affect more than one island and any undesignated islands, while Local Trust Committees deal with matters affecting the special needs, development or characteristics of each designated island specified in the Act. The elected trustees' knowledge of local affairs, environmental problems, and public opinion is vital to the development and implementation of Trust policies.

Regional Districts administer provincial and regional policies and provide a variety of services throughout the Trust area. Electoral Area Directors are entitled to take part in Local Trust Committee meetings within their electoral area but may not vote.

All of these people share a cooperative responsibility to carry out the objects of the Trust.

Preservation and Protection

The Act charges the Trust to preserve and protect the islands. The Trust interprets this to mean it must promote policies which will allow future generations the opportunity of deciding how the islands should be maintained or developed. To accomplish this the Trust will monitor, and where necessary, regulate the rate and extent of development taking place in the Trust area and encourage

types of development that will maintain the essentially rural nature of the islands.

Community Plans and By-Laws

The Trust considers it desirable that each island community arrive at its own consensus of how it should develop, and the Official Community Plan should ideally be a statement of that consensus.

The dictionary defines consensus as "a collective opinion, general agreement, a representative trend".

The Trust believes the island community includes the following broad cross-section of people and interests:

- (a) Local residents, many of whom are retired, some of whom make a living locally; some are land owners, some are tenants, some are long time residents, some are newly arrived.
- (b) Large numbers of summer residents and/or visitors, many of whom may become full time residents.
- (c) Large land owners, both individual and corporate, both resident and absentee; including certified tree-farm and other forest land holders.
- (d) A larger "provincial interest" of the general public.

Trust policy, therefore, is to encourage and where necessary aid local island groups in the preparation of plans and by-laws which have community consensus. It is obvious that there will be compromise and adjustment required within each community, and the Trust will endeavour to assist in obtaining such general agreement,

to ensure that all community interests are adequately considered.

Preparation of plans and by-laws is primarily a function of the Regional Districts. The Official Community Plan should normally be developed first, since it is the blueprint for the future, setting out in broad terms how a community intends to accommodate and control population growth, and provide necessary public services, while maintaining a relatively unimpaired natural environment. To implement the plan, zoning and subdivision by-laws are needed. The zoning by-law specifies the uses permitted on different parcels of land, and the subdivision by-law specifies the conditions under which parcels can be divided into smaller lots. Other by-laws may also be needed to provide for community services, limit nuisances, and control pollution.

Some islands have already adopted plans and/or by-laws. Where changes in either are required by the later adoption of conflicting by-laws or plans, the Trust will advise and help to formulate such amendments.

When plans and by-laws have been adopted by an island community, and approved by the necessary agencies including the Islands Trust, it will be Trust policy to recommend to the Government that the "ten-acre freeze" for that island be lifted.

Carrying Capacity

The Trust will, in full consultation with local island groups, Regional Districts and other Provincial agencies, determine the desired kind, rate, and extent of growth of population based upon the carrying capacity of the natural and man-made systems of an island

or a group of islands.

The carrying capacity of an island will be based upon the capability of natural resources such as soils, water, and vegetation to sustain human activities without irreparable impairment. The capacity of an island may be altered by the provision of public services such as changes in transportation, provision of community water systems, or the improvement of the technology of waste management. Construction and development should be on a scale commensurate with that of the island concerned.

Where insufficient data on the carrying capacity exists, the Trust will, of necessity, adopt a conservative estimate of an island's capacity to accommodate growth. Population levels and distribution will be designed to protect the most vulnerable aspects of island environment and amenities so that the Trust can fulfill its long-term obligations to future generations.

Impact Costs

Population growth, new construction, and increased recreational use of the islands can cause social disruption and impose additional burdens upon local services and environment. It is the position of the Trust that the present islands' residents and taxpayers should not be required to bear the costs incurred in reducing the undesirable effects of further development. Therefore, individuals or groups benefitting from development must pay a fair share of the cost of reducing the undesirable impact of such developments and this will entail, of necessity, limitations on the use of land.

Agricultural Land

The Trust supports the aims of the Land Commission Act. The Land Commission describes the Agricultural Land Reserve as follows:

"An Agricultural Land Reserve is best described as a form of zoning that protects the land from the encroachment of non-agricultural development and limits the use of land within the Reserve to agricultural and other uses that do not diminish the capability of the land to produce crops."

The Trust endorses this protection and will not approve plans which are contrary to the intent of the Land Commission Act.

The Trust notes also the "conditional uses" permitted under Land Commission regulations, and will encourage innovative proposals for such "open land recreation uses" that will retain A.L.R. lands without subdivision and without permanent disturbance of the environment.

Farming activity is a land use that is essential to the character of the islands. All reasonable attempts to re-establish farming and horticulture and other agricultural pursuits as an active island industry will be promoted and encouraged.

Crown Land

On many islands, Crown Land now provides the only available public open space. Further alienation of Crown Land on any island will require careful and individual consideration. In some cases multiple use of the remaining Crown Land on the islands is desirable. In particular, no significant subdivision should take place without careful reference to local community plans and approval by local trust committees. The disposition of Crown Land

should be in accordance with the principles of Official Community Plans, and appropriate senior government agencies will be asked to participate in the formation of such plans.

Forestry

The retention of Tree-Farm Certificate and other forest land on the islands is considered to be in the best interest of the people of the Province. These forestry holdings provide large areas of open space at a minimum cost to the taxpayer.

Logging is an essential economic activity on many of the islands. Because of the special conditions of the islands, harvesting practices by either individual operators or large companies must be on a scale appropriate to the island concerned. Where possible cutting patterns and road construction should be designed to encourage recreation, preserve scenic values, and to develop good wildlife habitat and minimize erosion and run-off problems. Dumping, booming and sorting must be carried out in a manner that is the least damaging to the environment and in areas that will not conflict with other shoreline uses.

Sawmilling should be restricted to small mills which provide lumber primarily for local consumption. As with other industries strict protection against pollution and screening from public view should be provided.

Mining, Quarrying and Drilling

Gravel is needed for a variety of uses on the islands. However,

beaches are of greater importance for recreation, for aesthetic value and as components of foreshore ecosystems than as sources for gravel. The Trust does not approve gravel extraction from beaches.

Removing whole areas and components of the physical landscape is not in keeping with the preservation and protection of the islands. The Trust will examine extensive removal of material and either suggest alternative supply sources or insist upon full restoration of the disturbed areas.

The Trust area should be closed to all drilling for oil and gas whether on land or beneath surrounding water.

Water

The protection of the sources of potable water is essential to the well-being of islands' residents. Therefore, the Trust will undertake measures in conjunction with other agencies to ensure that a basic level of protection is assured for all major sources of drinking water on the islands including watershed areas. All lakes should be protected for possible future uses.

Natural Heritage

The Trust supports the Archaeological and Historic Sites Committees and will endorse measures they consider desirable to locate and identify archaeological and historic sites on the islands, and assist in their preservation.

The preservation of environmentally significant or endangered

lands through acquisition or other means is a basic Trust objective. Furthermore, the protection of trees, vegetation and wildlife of the islands, is a vital concern. To better protect these elements and to determine the impact of human activities the Trust will collect existing information, and encourage and conduct new research protects. This may encompass subjects as varied as protection of natural resources to imaginative and beneficial taxation policies.

The visual aspects of the islands and the potential for other aesthetic experiences are important elements of the islands' amenities. Hence measures to protect the integrity of scenic corridors and vistas are basic elements of the Trust policy.

Foreshore

The Islands' foreshore (land and water, including the backshore, inter-tidal area, and the offshore) is an integral part of the landscape. Uses of the foreshore should not conflict with each other or with the adjacent shorelands and must not lead to long-term degradation. When intensive development of the foreshore is considered, a bio-physical assessment of its impact should be made.

Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound

Water quality in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound is being degraded by industrial and domestic wastes, which originate in many cases outside the Trust area. The Trust will oppose any activities which will further reduce the quality of the water.

Means of protection against oil and other pollution from ships

and the discharge of sewage and litter from pleasure craft is a priority concern of the Trust.

The Trust supports all moves to keep the Strait of Georgia closed to large oil tankers.

Recreation

The development of a well planned and integrated recreational system in the islands is a major concern of the Trust. It intends to encourage the kind of recreational activities that have the least impact on the natural environment of the islands. For example, most marine activities, wilderness parks, hiking trails, riding and bicycle paths are generally preferable to scenic drives and road-based camp-grounds, but the need for provision of facilities for all ages and types of people must be recognized. It is expected that plans will provide for the recreational and cultural needs of both local residents and visitors, often in separate and distinct areas and facilities. Multi-use of facilities such as community schools is to be encouraged.

Shoreline areas are a major recreational resource of the islands. Therefore, increased public access to beach and other shoreline areas should be provided but overuse or abuse must be prevented.

Sophisticated overnight accommodation or intensive recreational use on some islands may have to be discouraged or limited where the size or character of the island is such that significant impairment of the environment might result. However, the Trust believes it has a responsibility to make it possible for many people to share, even for short periods, the pleasures of an "island experience", and hopes

that innovative ideas and projects will be put forward to accomplish this. Such activities can also help provide an economic base on many islands.

Residential summer camps, youth hostels, supervised camping facilities, marine based parks with rudimentary facilities, etc., oriented as they are toward the public enjoyment of the islands, are a desirable form of recreational activity.

The Trust recognizes that increased public use of the islands may generate friction between local residents and visitors. Therefore, the Trust will encourage adequate supervision, control and servicing of public areas.

Transportation

The Trust is of the opinion that the transportation systems serving the islands should reflect the objectives expressed in the various Official Community Plans.

Ferry service is the primary means of access to the islands. Terminal layout should be improved and transit service provided to reduce dependence on automobile travel. The Trust feels the level of service provided should be in keeping with the basic travel needs of residents and visitors, but not of such a level as to promote extensive development of commuter traffic.

The Trust feels roads should be designed to an acceptable standard for safe driving but not to a sufficiently high standard to encourage high speed travel. The width, grade and alignment should be adequate to deal with traffic needs but suitable for moderate speeds only. Road layout should attempt to minimize the

amount of land needed, be in harmony with the topography and special landscape features, and retain the rural atmosphere.

Local Industry

Artistic occupations, small businesses and workshops which serve local needs and provide employment are important elements of a rural environment. The islands are ideal places for the practice of a great diversity of arts and crafts, but the Trust does not feel that large commercial or industrial developments are generally in keeping with the islands' character. For some people, an important part of island living is the search for a means of livelihood not in conflict with a rural environment.

Utilities

The Trust favours underground servicing wherever possible and does not favour the construction of visible overhead power lines not intended to provide specific service to the islands.

Local Services

The Trust considers the provision of local services such as garbage collection and disposal, community water supply, and fire protection to be a local community matter or a regional district responsibility. These services should be provided at a level commensurate with the needs and resources of the individual islands. However, where the provision of basic services poses a general problem on a number of islands the Trust will attempt to find solutions.

Housing and Community Care Facilities

The Trust recognizes that an indigenous lifestyle has developed among long-time residents on a number of islands. If at all possible these residents should not be required to leave their homes to end their days in institutions in a strange environment. Accordingly, home nursing, and housing for the elderly, as well as community care facilities such as health centres to service everyone, should be encouraged on islands where the need exists.

SUMMARY

The basic elements of Trust policy are:

- (a) Recognition that the islands are a resource of national importance but of finite size, justifying provincial as well as local interest in how they are used and provincial and local regulations for their protection.
- (b) Provision of as varied recreational opportunity and experience as the islands are able to offer, now and in the future, including a range of holiday accommodation and facilities.
- (c) Retention of the native flora and fauna and both unique and typical island scenery; and recognition that some areas are too fragile for any intensive use and must be protected by creation of reserves.
- (d) Establishment of a pattern of land use which will allow needed and reasonable development in the present but which will at the same time preserve land from alienation, so that future

generations will have the opportunity to make their own choices and decisions.

- (e) Development of the islands only in ways which are in sympathy with the landscape and which make the most of each site's natural characteristics.
- (f) Recognition that the islands are first of all an existing community of people, and the welfare of those people, and those who join them and come after them, must always be a primary concern of the Trust.

This policy does not and could not decree how each part of an island is to be used. What it does do, however, is provide a series of principles on which the Trust will base its actions when exercising its powers under the Act.

In general, the Trust regards its role only in part as a regulatory one; it believes that only through widespread public concern and understanding, combined with a sense of community interest and responsibility, will the islands be effectively preserved and protected.

August, 1975