

**From:** HHolm [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 31, 2019 2:25 PM  
**To:** Islands2050  
**Subject:** Dec-31-19 Review of the Trust Policy Syatement  
**Attachments:** Dec-31-19 'conversation' re Trust Policy Statement.pdf

Dear Whomever,

Please let me know who is receiving this email and how you are tasked. Thank you.

The attached comments are hurried and have not been edited. However, in my experience, no one will read the document anyway.

Harlene

## **Islands 2050 Submitted by Harlene Holm**

No policy– however well worded, formatted and illustrated– can reverse the culture within the Islands Trust if that culture takes/is taking an entirely different course.

I have loosely grouped my ‘conversation’ into several subsections. Yes, this is rushed. It was last on my dreaded list after washing the bathroom walls and cleaning the fridge.

#1 I was a Local Trustee for Denman Island when the initial Trust Policy was written by the elected Trustees over the course of many meetings, community outreach sessions and staff assistance when requested. To this day the statements hold true.

What we didn’t foresee was the escalating cost of land and the resulting gentrification of the islands. Thus the Trust Policy Statement is silent on the need for affordable housing.

Despite subsequent consultants’ reports prepared for the Trust Council to examine loss of diversity and affordability as land prices soared, affordable housing remains much as the the Greeks described a codpiece: much talk and a little wool. On April 7/16 I contributed the following to the Trust Housing Forum. I might as well have used my time to weed my garden.

### **Brief to Islands Trust Forum on Community Housing, June 13, 2016**

submitted by Harlene Holm, Denman Island

As someone who has worked to create affordable housing on Denman Island for eight years and provided information to those working on similar projects in the Trust Area and elsewhere, I have the following suggestions for consideration at the June Forum on Community Housing:

*1. Articulate the capabilities, limitations and priorities of Islands Trust land use powers in relation to creating and/or supporting affordable housing the Trust Area.*

The existing Trust Policy Statement is essentially silent on the subject of affordable housing. Because local trust committee bylaws cannot control the use or limit the resale value of development intended for this purpose, adding densities for ‘affordable’ housing may well have the undesirable consequence of simply adding more houses to the market. As a result, the Trust needs to support non-profit organizations which can and will control use and which can and will take the land out of the market place.

*2. Create clear definitions of 'low-income,' 'affordable housing' and 'attainable housing.'*

There is an urgent need for clarity and consistency in the terminology used when discussing this subject. In practice, terms such as 'near market' and 'under market' are basically meaningless. As well, using a one-size-fits-all term such as 'affordable/attainable' invites confusion and abuse. One need only look at the results of the catch-all terminology used around the Province: increased density and a smatter of 'under market' units that often are only distinguishable from

market units by their cramped square footage. Those creating the definitions need to identify the purpose of 'affordable' and/or 'attainable' housing and incorporate these ideas into the definitions. For example, is the purpose it to meet the need for housing among those with an established residency in the community or is it to attract professionals and tradespeople to the community?

3. *Seek an understanding of the 'market.'*

Real estate prices, number of houses for sale, and available long term rental units are aspects of 'market.' Is the number of available rentals diminishing? How many houses are empty, either as part-time vacation homes or as speculative holdings? How many houses are used for short-term vacation rentals? The Trust may not solve housing issues by establishing this kind of a broad understanding of the problem, but understanding the problem is a necessary first step. As an example, on Denman Island more properties than ever are listed for sale, housing starts continue and the population (according to the most recent census) is declining.

4. *Consider breaking down the silos and opening the door to communication among the islands.*

Planners, Trust offices and local trust committees are constrained by structured administrative mechanisms and appear to have little interest in exchanging information among interested parties. I suggest that the Islands Trust collect, identify in plain English (for example, Bylaw 205 reveals nothing of its content) and maintain an island-by-island list of local OCP policies and land use regulations which address affordable housing. This collection should include the contact information for all island organizations working on affordable housing and it should be available to Trust planners, local trustees and the general public via the Trust website. Once created, the site should be regularly updated.

Harlene Holm  
April 7, 2016

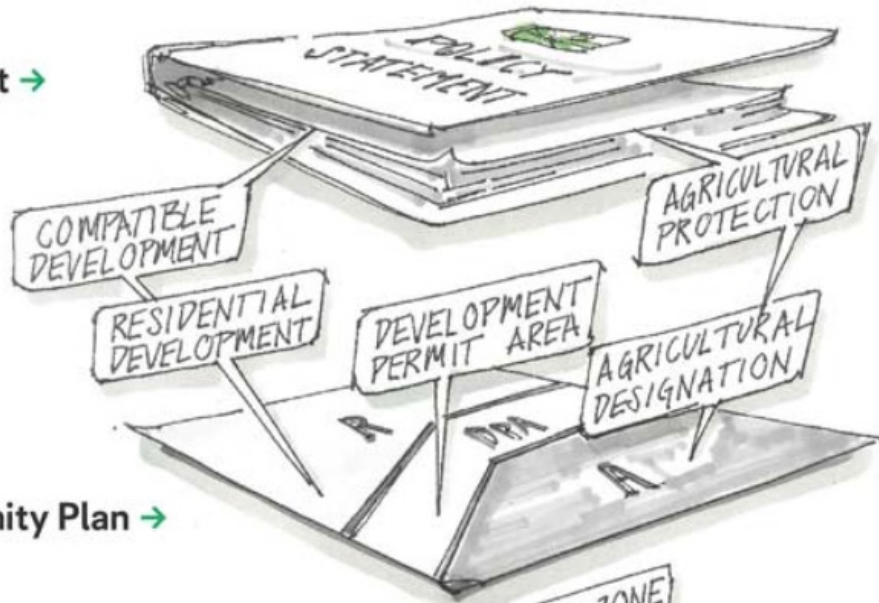
A silent Policy Statement has made it easier for staff to let Denman's Seniors' Affordable Housing application languish for two years until drafted as part of a new urban-based, one-size-fits-all (except the proposal) rental zone.

\* \* \* \*

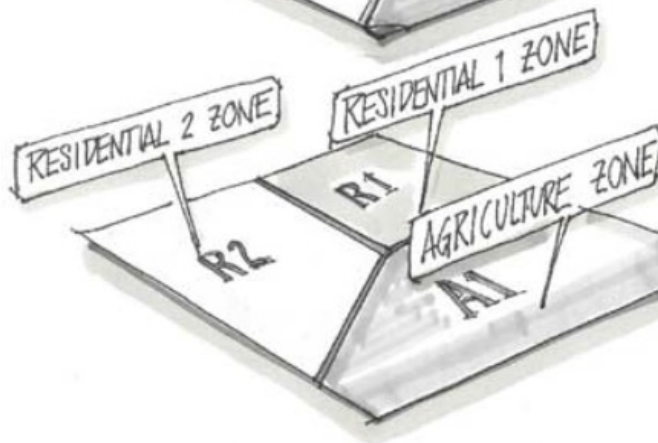
#2 The existing Trust Policy Statement seems a last remnant of the vanishing Trust mandate.

Take for example the Trust website illustration of the Islands 2050 process: multi-layers of "development" managed by OCP's and LUBs to create an "Island Landscape" seemingly without fresh water, a coast line, topography or a critter in sight. Islands 2015 = plan the landscape.

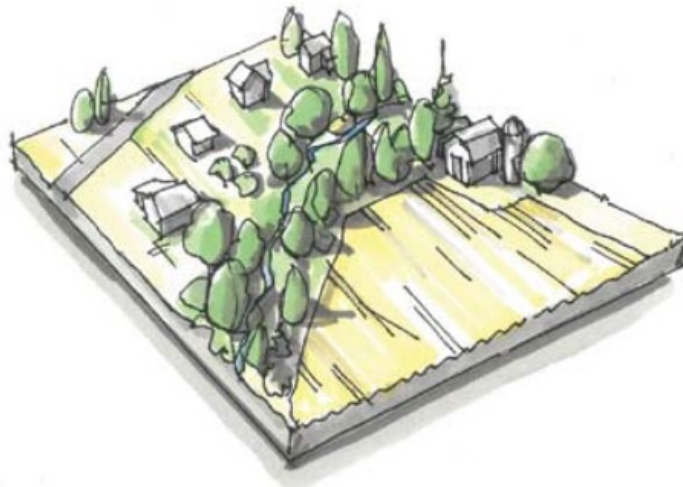
Policy Statement →



Official Community Plan →



Land Use Bylaw →



Island landscape →

The predominance of “agricultural protection” reflects the Trust’s move to harmonize its regulations with Provincial Ministries despite the fact that one of the original motivations for creating an Islands Trust was because islands were finite and special by their very nature. On Denman Island, 95% of our wetlands and surface water areas are designated agricultural land and at least two ‘farmers’ on Denman have drained water that the aquifers, plants and critters need to survive.

The Trust Policy must continue to direct the Trust to extend “protect” beyond generic resource and land management discourse so as to encapsulate the essential basis of the Trust mandate. That includes challenging Provincial and Federal Ministry and regulatory powers that can and do make a mockery of the Trust mandate. Islands need a strong voice to protect the environment and unique character of the islands.

\* \* \* \*

#3 Bureaucratic changes within the Trust are contributing to the blurring of the Trust mandate as the decision-making process moves closer to that of municipalities and regional districts.

a. Outside of a formal, advertised meetings, Trustees are bound not to confer with each other and, to a growing extent, not to informally confer with anyone within the community or access outside experts (point 3 of the of the Guiding Principles). At least on our island, local trustees do not even have access to the draft minutes of the last LTC meeting until the agenda package is available 5 business days prior to the following meeting. Preparation has become next to impossible.

b. Community participation and input is limited by LTC participation guidelines, baffling meeting protocol and trendy consultation ‘opportunities’. Like our Trustees, residents have no idea what issues will arise at a meeting until the agenda package is made available and the last minute addendum is finally posted (sometimes reports are only available as late as during the meeting).

c. Trustees are becoming figureheads with the real decisions made by the staff. Information flows to the staff and information is critical to decision making.

d. While staff appears to expand its jurisdiction (e.g. staff reviews FLNRORD water) and regulatory tools such as DPA’s without follow-up enforcement mechanisms.

Do not change the Guiding Principles. In fact, start using these principles as a touchstone for determining the health of the Trust Council and LTC’s.

#4 The Trust Policy Statement must retain its core statement: “The purpose of the Policy Statement is to establish a vision for the future of the Islands Trust Area that reflects the values of residents of the Trust Area and of the Province generally.”

“Values” is a suitable abstract noun because the purpose is primarily multi-layered and arises from a human rather than bureaucratic undertaking. The role of Trust staff is to contribute its expertise and skills to assist this process where possible.

Cost saving measures are eroding pursuit of these values as LTC meetings are fewer and fewer and as staff is focused on generic bylaws designed to reduce staff time spent on future applications by providing infinite development possibilities toward urbanization.

A good beginning could be stop “receiving for information” the countless community briefs that express concerns, ideas and solutions.

Harlene