

From: Irene Wotton <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, November 10, 2025 2:10 PM
To: Islands2050 <Islands2050@islandstrust.bc.ca>
Subject: Islands 2050 feedback

Having read through the Islands Trust 2050 questionnaire, I don't feel that giving a generalized approval or disapproval is productive, fair, or even possible - the questions/choices are too general. I have heard complaints about the Trust processes from people on other islands but that is the nature of the public process and that it is not uncommon to have disgruntled participants but when the complaints are that there has been a lack of inclusiveness or the Trust isn't listening, that generally means the Trust process has not been inclusive, transparent, accessible in a way that meets the public's needs satisfactorily, and the Trust is not really hearing nor responding satisfactorily to feedback and sharing that feedback with the public. Then the Trust has failed to be responsive and transparent and the public is right to be disgruntled. When the concerns are around an Official Community Plan, which is intended to engage, involve, educate and empower community members, this requires answers, feed back to concerns, and developing consensus decisions and that means involving the community. None of this has been happening with the Gambier OCP and I fully realize that the Islands Trust 2050 is about planning into the future for the Trust's guiding policies as an organization rather than specific projects and work that the Trust spearheads. I don't feel confident in the Trust's abilities to improve the self governance issues.

When the first 2 questionnaires were launched for the Gambier OCP, the lack of understanding of the different communities on Gambier and that living in a remote water access only area is VERY different than living on Gambier's southwest peninsula with foot passenger ferry service, roads, BC Hydro and high speed wifi, left 1/3 of the population who live on 93% of Gambier's privately owned land, wondering what this questionnaire had to do them. That and the fact the questionnaires didn't work properly so had not been tested adequately before being launched, turned a huge number of people off the entire process. The potential participation of these people may have been minimal but by being faced with poorly worded questions that made little sense and an online format that didn't work as it should, many people walked away from the process. It is harder to change the perception of the public that it is to do it right the first time. Those questionnaires showed a profound lack of knowledge of Gambier Island by whoever developed them. While the sporadic meetings and information were watched by some of the water access only residents, there has been little enthusiasm or support for the process which hasn't offered many opportunities for input and the community input has not been fully shared with the

public. Sharing information, being open and transparent, is part of developing community and is essential to a community planning process. Instead, it has been a secretive series of meetings with First Nations resulting in an exclusive process that has resulted in impractical and unsafe dock management plans, intrusive and unnecessary archeological studies when other communities in other parts of the world makes this a much easier process to navigate. The response rate has been low to the questionnaires and the only official public event at New Brighton. For an organization (The Trust) to say they don't know how to reach the water access only property owners in order to consult/get input, also shows a lack of willingness and leadership - the people of Gambier didn't have a list but managed to connect with the various disconnected pockets of properties on Gambier, on short notice, and get 60 people out to a meeting on a weekday in March 2025, but the Trust representatives say they cannot find ways to engage and connect with the islanders! The Trust's international café in New Brighton had about 40 participants, very likely all from the south west peninsula but the Trust didn't ask people to identify general area or zoning of their property so as to understand the different types of lifestyle requirements in different areas of Gambier and also how people responded to their questions. There has been a lack of creative thinking in this process. If the Trust cannot engage with people, then perhaps, they shouldn't be pursuing an OCP review (targeted or otherwise). Without community input an OCP by planners is not going to represent the public and is a useless document that doesn't reflect community values.

The Trust is supposed to preserve and protect the islands and their unique amenities, yet it is precisely these attributes along with multigenerational properties with a long history that have been at risk of being overlooked/not heard from in this process - and as a result, being lost - the mostly larger Rural Residential lots that make up the 93% of privately owned land on Gambier that are water access only are what the Trust wants in order to retain the rural and heavily forested nature of Gambier. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in every community that should be tapped in these processes and this has not happened.

I realize, as the process of reconciliation with First Nations is teetering on imploding in on itself due to the lack of transparency in the provincial government process, is at least part of the reason for how this Gambier OCP review has been run. I don't see that it has been useful that secretive meetings have been held by the Trust with First Nations. The Trust should have been more open with property owners and more inclusive regardless of what the province preferred. Alternately, rather than waste money, simply set the OCP process aside until the reconciliation negotiations are completed although it is now looking like many years before reconciliation will even be back on track. It is the residents of a community that need to be involved in their OCP, educated and consulted. Into that

visioning, First Nations participation and rights can be incorporated through an educational and shared process. With nothing settled after so many years of meetings with First Nations peoples and a now volatile situation around fee simple property rights/land titles, incorporating First Nations' wishes and goals into an OCP should be put on hold until property rights have been resolved.

Why try and fit multiple moving targets into a 25 year community plan? The Trust 2050 plan will require policy amendments before the 25 years are up. Only once the public issues around freehold title and aboriginal rights are settled, and once the exclusive meetings between government employees/politicians and First Nations become more inclusive to include representatives of the public, THEN the OCP and the Trust 2050 processes should be reopened to integrate First Nations' rights. To build on shifting ground is to invite ongoing problems. What is needed is gathering together to develop consensus decisions instead of the exclusive and divisive meetings that have been the process for reconciliation thus far.

If the Trust cannot run an inclusive OCP process that engages islanders, then I don't think the Trust should be planning a 25 year policy document for their own growth and management. Many people question whether the Trust is over extending their mandate and adding layers of jurisdiction that are onerous and confusing to navigate. I cannot support what the Trust is putting forward the Trust 2050 Plan - there are too many potential conflicts with the current unfinished business of reconciliation.

Lastly, if you have been following Tom Isaac who was a lead negotiator for the province in the 1990s, the reconciliation process is a mess with no plan. To invest in The Trust's 2050 plan and to invest in further OCPs before we understand just what is going to happen with reconciliation as a whole, is a waste of resources. Wait - there is going to be more coming now that the public's interest has been caught. Tom Isaac mentions that BC has done a robust job with First Nations negotiations but a dismal job with the general public and the general public is just realizing the danger they are facing.



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I used to be a big supporter of the Islands Trust. My confidence that the Trust is working for the islands' best interests has been lost due to the past years of reconciliation and other Trust decisions that have excluded robust public input.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Wotton
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