

From: Islands2050
Sent: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 8:22 AM
To: Islands2050
Subject: FW: Letter from youth

On Mar 3, 2021, at 8:52 AM, Molly Blais [REDACTED] wrote:

Sue Ellen Fast,

During the global disaster we're living through right now, the value of our community in the Gulf Islands has never been more clear. The diversity of our community is not only part of what makes life here special, it's what makes it safe.

So while we seem to be surviving the pandemic pretty well, because of the other major crisis predating the pandemic - housing - this foundation of our community is quickly being eroded.

Hundreds of healthcare workers, educators, front line grocery store heroes, workers who staff our restaurants, grow food, care for our elderly and sick, or make the art and crafts we all love were being forced off the islands due to the high cost or just complete lack of safe available housing. These trends are only getting worse since the pandemic.

So to hear that, instead of working hard to creatively solve these problems, the Islands Trust is actively discussing whether it's better to simply walk away from responsibility for community well being entirely is shocking.

We understand there is a group who are making the case that the Trust's mandate should be not include affordable housing, and in fact be focussed only on the environment. That there is a motion to remove from the Policy Statement up for discussion right now both housing, and the original dual purpose of also protecting our unique island community and culture.

This is misguided. The climate emergency is stretching all of us, but looking at climate solutions solely through an ecological lens and ignoring people is the opposite of a compassionate approach. Building walls - or moats - is not an acceptable response.

Climate solutions must include people, particularly those most at risk and impacted by our current systems. That's climate justice. With smart planning and incentives from the Trust and others, this can be done with less impact on our environment than the current mansion-driven rural sprawl our system is encouraging today.

I write to you as one of the few young people who are residents of the Gulf islands.

When I first arrived on Hornby Island 5 years ago, it was very difficult to find housing. I came to work, create and contribute to the community.

I have spent nearly the entirety of these 5 years living in trailers. Yet I am lucky. Lucky to have a place I am allowed to be. Lucky that it's a place with a roof and walls. Heating is a struggle especially in the winter. But I am lucky. Because I have been afforded the opportunity to stay on Hornby Island.

Nevermind the fact that trailers and mobile homes were only ever supposed to be a temporary solution to housing shortage. Over the time I have resided on this island, I have seen local bylaws get tighter and tighter around this kind of housing. It fares worse on Denman where there is a more clear community divide, these kinds of rental units are being reported, their residents evicted, and condemned to homelessness. Because there is no homes here and there's just as few available off island.

This is indicative of a clear class divide. The wealthy land-owners who want their private and quiet piece of paradise, and those who have their lives rooted here and no place else to turn. It is heartbreaking to see his neighbour to neighbour betrayal.

I find it ironic people move to these islands and expect privacy, as if there isn't monster houses packed on to half acre lots, entire walls made of windows that you could view their whole life from the road. They cut down trees that block their view, so you could see them from the water too if you wanted. And yet there is this push to perceive that the unwanted population and housing density is those living in creative rental units are causing the real problem and lack of privacy. Rather than these new residents who just don't want to have neighbours. I've seen examples of this such as, a summer resident calling the police for a noise complaint that a local residents of 40+ years' grandchildren were playing in the street in the afternoon. And on beloved local bands who practice at the same time every week. This is awful and makes those of us to live here and dedicate our lives to these islands and these communities feel hopeless.

I am 25 years old, and I will likely never be able to own property in my home community while hundreds of houses sit empty 10+ months of the year. This is disheartening and leaves the future of the Gulf islands in limbo.

