

From: Sharon Small [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 12:08 PM
To: northinfo
Subject: Untenable Hornby Island tourist traffic correlated with escalating and unregulated STVRs
Attachments: HILTC letter for DI TIG & Flagstone.docx

Dear Trustees,

Please make sure that the attached gets the attention it deserves to preserve and protect Denman Island as a tranquil rural environment that has been violated by tens of thousands of tourist related cars crossing the island to and from Hornby. This unregulated tourist industry has a dire affect on Denman, islanders, emotionally, physically, and financially.

The attached letter written to the Hornby island LTC correlates the dramatic increase in the number of tourist related vehicles crossing and often backed up at the two ferry terminals. that increase every year.

Respectfully,

Sharon Small

Denman Island Resident

The following letter is a response to the Hornby Island LTC's review of its bylaw on short-term rentals in which I correlate the continuing increase in tourist related vehicle volume on Route 22 with the proliferation of short-term rentals. Given that the HI Economic Enhancement and HI short-term rental groups are campaigning for more short-term rentals throughout the remaining months of the year, and a larger ferry to accommodate more tourists, this is the time for Denman islanders to communicate their views to the HI LTC.

The Hornby Economic Enhancement group's (HICEEC) resolve to keep the short-term rental bylaw unchanged and expand into the remaining months of the year would significantly impact an already overburdened infrastructure— Denman terminal-to-terminal roads and the Baynes Sound Connector. Thus, most Denman residents would support the Advisory Planning Commission's recommendations to reduce the months of operation from the current five to the original three and to require Temporary Use Permits [https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/62d19009-a4bd-42a8-babd-df4a4bea3a00/downloads/APC-recommendations March22.pdf?ver=1682978303774](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/62d19009-a4bd-42a8-babd-df4a4bea3a00/downloads/APC-recommendations%20March22.pdf?ver=1682978303774). These changes would could control and balance the number of economically valued short-term rentals with our shared preserve and protect mandate and Denman's OCP transportation bylaw on minimizing negative traffic impacts.

The following rebuttal to the HICEEC Vice Chair's claims illuminates the profound influence the present volume of Hornby tourist traffic has on the infrastructure.

The HICEEC Vice-Chair recommends keeping the OCP Bylaw on short-term rentals unchanged because self-regulation works.

Fact: The number of short-term rentals since the 2014 bylaw was approved has increased from 14 to estimates of between 80 and 160, with many others operating illegally throughout the year and without oversight. In response to a concern that more short-term rentals would affect affordable housing numbers, the Vice-Chair (and Consultant Patricia Mulroney) claim there's no data linking short-term rentals with the affordable housing crisis. In fact, published university and B.C government research and recent B.C. Legislation on short- term rentals strongly contradict this view.

FACT: In 2019 Dr. David Wachsmuth, Canada Research Chair of Urban Governance at McGill University, contributed to the first comprehensive study correlating the rapid growth of short-term rentals to the decline in affordable housing. His research, which focused on Tofino and a number of other B.C. communities, concluded that **too many short-term rentals are not licensed (one half, according to an Airbnb study); that they drive up rent; and that they are responsible for removing 19.1% housing rentals from the market (Sept. 21. 2023 Bloomberg).** In addition to documenting the trend towards commercial operations, his data concluded that short-term rentals are increasing 17.8% each year and are responsible for renters paying 20% more for rent. In June of this year, he found that of 28,510 active listings, 16,810 were taken off the long-term rental market ([CTVnews.ca](https://www.ctvnews.ca) September 21, 2023).

The Joint Union of B.C. Municipalities and the Province of B.C. Advisory Group on Short-Term Rentals Report concludes that **short-term rentals have a “staggering” impact on affordable housing**. This report confirms that short-term rentals removed more than 16,000 B.C. homes from the residential rental pool (UBCM.ca June 30, 2021). Cortes Island, with a population similar to Hornby’s, conducted a study that also directly links the decline in affordable housing and increases in rental instability to the growth of short-term rentals (CBC News, August 14, 2023). **Anecdotal and circumstantial evidence on Hornby support these conclusions.**

FACT: Given the dramatic effect short-term rentals have on the current housing crisis, the B.C. Minister of Housing recently introduced strong legislation implementing the Joint Advisory Group’s recommendations. However, since Trust islands are exempt, The Islands Trust can opt in.

FACT: BCF vehicle statistics for Route 22 strongly argue that dramatic increases are connected to increases in legal and illegal short-term rentals on Hornby. The BCF Annual Report to March 2023 states that of the short routes, only Routes 21 and 22 showed a significant revenue increase. Route 22 increases from 2022 follow:

May: 13,100 vehicles represent a 17.88% increase;
June: 15,114 vehicles represent a 9.34% increase;
July: 20,856 vehicles represent a 13.06% increase;
August: 22,746 vehicles represent a 15% increase.

FACT: Unless you live on the Denman speedway between the ferry terminals, you cannot imagine the assault such an untenable volume of vehicles have on our formerly tranquil community. Also, too many drivers engaged in reckless driving to get ahead of the ferry line even when the two ferries at Denman West were running last summer. Also, vehicles that cannot manage the Denman Road hill and many racing Hornby drivers render the alternative multi-use Lacon/McFarland route treacherous for local drivers, walkers, and cyclists year round.

FACT: The problem Hornby traffic is creating for Denman is recorded on the BCF Denman Community Page. The major concern of the 170 residents who attended the May 26 BCF facilitated roundtable event and the over 400 who submitted surveys is **safety and quality of life**. Islanders shared their anguish and fear about encounters with terminal-to-terminal recklessness and frustration that escalating tourist cross traffic volume violates our preserve and protect mandate and OCP bylaw on transportation to mitigate traffic issues.

THE HICEEC Vice-Chair questions whether short-term rentals have an effect on ferry space.

FACT: To date, Hornby has not surveyed the number of illegal and legal short-term rentals that are currently operating. What is known, however, is that too many tourist vehicles towing trailers and RVs and tourist industry service vehicles take up from two to

even four ferry spaces and that the wait times are excessive. Residents moved to Denman because of a desire to live in a tranquil, rural environment with easy ferry access to off island jobs, schools, services, and hospitals. However, residents who live on the speedway to Hornby no longer enjoy a tranquil environment and Islanders no longer have assured ferry boarding at Buckley Bay or at Denman West without excessive wait times.

FACT: The backed up traffic forces many residents to avoid ferry travel when Hornby tourist traffic is expected to be high. Particularly frustrated, are off island workers and families with children going to school or participating in off island activities. Also, despite years of complaints to BCF and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, backed up traffic at both Denman ferry terminals creates peril for our ambulance and fire truck drivers, local drivers, and cyclists who are often forced to use one narrow lane without adequate shoulders.

FACT: Businesses and artisans complain that long wait times at either Buckley Bay or Denman West have a strong negative effect on revenue. They are paying directly for increases in delivery and service costs and indirectly for wait times that cut into work time when making trips off island to pick up or deliver supplies. Excessive ferry wait time is also reducing day visitor revenue. Not so many years ago, large groups of senior cyclists regularly visited Denman in the high season to circumnavigate the island, visit craft studios, shop and eat. Most now avoid Denman in the high season, as do many day visitors from the Comox Valley and Parksville area.

FACT: Since the round table meeting, BCF has made changes to mitigate the impact of Hornby tourist traffic on the infrastructure. They hired extra flaggers at the Denman West Terminal and often, but not consistently, monitor the flow of traffic so that it does not back up at both Denman terminals to gridlock major intersections. Although the two ferry system improved service during the week, islanders are united in complaining that it did not alter the untenable traffic volume problems. BCF has assured Denman that it will discuss the Gravelly Bay terminal expansion and the summer schedule when face-to-face community engagement resumes.

The Friends of Denman Forests, the small but mighty group that galvanized community support around the traffic volume issue last winter, emphasize that changes to the Gravelly Bay Terminal cannot be made until the infrastructure issue is managed. They support, along with those who attended the May roundtable event, the need for a direct ferry to Hornby as the only long-term option for Denman (see the BCF Denman Community Page). In the meantime, both islands are saddled with a dysfunctional and inadequate cable ferry until the next budget cycle in four years.

Pulitzer Prize winner Wallace Stegner writes, “All sins are sins of excess.” Denman is suffering from an excess of Hornby tourist traffic. Approval of Hornby Island’s Advisory Planning Commission’s recommendations, therefore, should result in fewer short-term rentals and a significant reduction of traffic volume. Also, by enforcing licensing, eliminating commercial operations and controlling numbers, Hornby would be in compliance with other Trust islands, communities and cities across Canada, and B.C. Ministry of Housing legislation on short-term rentals.

Until there is strong oversight and regulation of Hornby short-term rentals, Denman's preserve and protect mandate and OCP remain compromised and the infrastructure dramatically overburdened.

Respectfully,

Sharon Small,
Denman Resident