

From: Henry Touwslager [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2023 6:56 PM
To: Alex Allen
Cc: northinfo
Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding Proposed Changes to Short-Term Vacation Rentals on Hornby Island

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Dear Trustee Alex Allen,

I trust this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed changes to short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) on Hornby Island. As a resident and property owner deeply invested in the community, I believe it is crucial to voice the potential impact of these changes on our island's residents, businesses, and overall vitality.

I have been a proud property owner near Whaling Station on Hornby Island for the past eight years. While I am a part-time resident, spending approximately four months on the island annually, my commitment to the community extends beyond property ownership. I actively engage in volunteer work, collaborating on projects such as securing the old fire hall with Spark, contributing to specific initiatives with the trail crew and invasive plant eradication committee, acting as a (past) member of the recreation committee and a current member of the emergency preparedness committee. With respect to my career, I am a retired professional engineer specializing in Building Envelope Consulting.

I rent out my house for part of the summer and utilize it for the rest of the year. My guests, 95% of whom are residents of British Columbia, hold a deep fondness for Hornby Island. I do not consider them a burden on the island. Most feel at least somewhat part of the community. They are careful with their footprint and all are well aware of the water conservation requirements. With respect to water, I measure their usage, and it consistently remains below 500 gallons per group per week which I would consider low. I personally witnessed their positive contribution to the island and community.

I am certain that my past and future guests and all those others who visit the island will be devastated if they find out they cannot stay on Hornby Island. Many are from the Victoria area and Metro Vancouver

and cannot make a short day trip. They need at least three or four days to make it worth their time and weekly visits are perfect for them. I considered getting them involved so please believe I could get about 15 past guests to sign a petition or write letters indicating their strong desire and even a need to continue to visit the island they love. Many tell me that the week on Hornby Island is the highlight of their year. I spared you their extra letters for now but please let me know if you consider the quantity of contacts you have and I will happily make the requests for their opinions.

With respect to background facts and assumptions, I am quite certain that you have received one or more letters from the Hornby Island Short Term Rental Association (HISTRA) and its members, of which I am one. Therefore, I will not repeat what you already know.

I find myself skeptical about the core rationale behind the removal or restriction of short-term vacation rentals (STVRs), especially the idea that such measures would contribute to increased homeownership for those less fortunate. I have reservations about the practicality of this objective without addressing more extensive economic and income-related challenges. I hold the view that eliminating STVRs will likely not enable a single family to attain homeownership as property values will not drop much if at all, based on these actions. I expect its impact on the long-term rental market will be minimal. Moreover, any perceived benefits in terms of available long-term rental housing might be overshadowed by the adverse effects on various businesses in our community, many of which will suffer significant reductions in revenue and several which will end up shutting down. I understand the coop makes all its profits in the summer and something will have to change there to the detriment of full-time residents.

I might add that in a recent interview with the former Governor of the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz stated (something to the effect that) politics and government mandates cannot fix housing issues and the only real solution to the housing shortage is special projects such as the wartime housing project (and perhaps developments like Beulah Creek).

It's disconcerting to note the absence of professional and independent studies supporting the proposed changes. The potential unintended consequences of such a decision could be far-reaching and affect the very fabric of our community. I urge you to consider the long-term effects and thoroughly evaluate the decisions' impact on the diverse residents of Hornby Island. Clearly, the role of STVRs goes beyond individual property owners; it sustains local businesses, supports festivals, and enhances the overall vibrancy of our community. Limiting STVRs could have a ripple effect, impacting not only property owners but also guests, local businesses, and the island's accessibility.

Considering the extensive recreational land and parks on Hornby Island, it's crucial to recognize that all residents of BC have a rightful share in these public spaces. If short-term vacation rentals (STVRs) are reduced or cancelled, it would limit taxpayers' access to these amenities. This consequence, on its own, appears simply unfair. Is it the role of Islands Trust to hoard the land for the current owners and residents or keep the spaces open to the residents of BC and others?

In conclusion, I urge you to approach this matter with utmost prudence, taking into account the diverse perspectives of Hornby Island residents. A decision of this magnitude requires careful consideration of its broader implications. I appreciate your dedication to serving our community and trust that you will weigh these concerns thoughtfully.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to a fruitful discussion on December 13th.

Sincerely,

Henry Touwslager

