



November 26, 2024

To: Islands Trust Hornby Local Trust Committee

Cc: James Warren, CVRD
Daniel Arbour, Area A Regional Director
Josie Osborne, M.L.A.

Subject: Request for Reconsideration of Proposed STVR Regulation on Hornby Island

Dear Hornby Local Trust Committee,

We are writing on behalf of the Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC) to respectfully request that the Islands Trust reconsider its currently indicated new approach to regulating short-term vacation rentals (STVRs). Specifically, we urge you to revisit the motion from February 2, 2024, which directed staff to explore the potential for business licensing for STVRs, rather than pursuing a new policy that would render this longstanding community practice illegal.

It seems that the current direction, which centers on Temporary Use Permits (TUPs) and a ban on STVRs, deviates from the intent behind the original motion and raises several concerns that we believe need to be addressed.

1. The Provincial Government's Support for Business Licensing Through Regional Districts

It is important to note that the provincial government has explicitly opened a pathway for communities like Hornby Island to benefit from business licensing programs through their Regional Districts. While the Islands Trust does not have the authority to implement business licensing directly, this should not be viewed as a negative reflection on the concept itself. The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has the capacity to oversee such a program, and this option provides an efficient and viable solution for Hornby Island.

The provincial government's decision to provide business licensing as a tool through Regional Districts is an opportunity that should not be overlooked. The CVRD has the staffing and expertise necessary to manage business licensing without burdening the Islands Trust with additional administrative complexities. This partnership would allow Hornby Island to regulate short-term vacation rentals effectively, while relieving Islands Trust of added bureaucracy and resource strain.

2. The Longstanding Tradition of Home Rentals on Hornby Island

Renting one's home for short-term use is an established and deeply embedded practice on Hornby Island. Many homeowners rely on this practice to maintain their properties or meet

temporary financial needs, such as home repairs. Forcing homeowners to navigate complex and punitive regulations could create unnecessary obstacles for our community members, many of whom are already stretched thin by the realities of island living.

Rather than outlawing this practice, a more reasonable approach would be to regulate it through a clear business licensing framework. This would allow homeowners to continue renting their properties legally while also addressing concerns about the impacts of short-term rentals on our island.

3. Avoiding Unintended Consequences

Making short-term rentals illegal risks pushing this activity underground, where it would be difficult to regulate or track. Homeowners may continue renting to "family and friends," bypassing tax obligations (such as PST, MRDT, and income taxes) and eroding the ability of the community to benefit from a responsible tourism framework. The Hornby Island Short Term Rental Association (HISTRA), which was created with support from HICEEC and the Islands Trust, has made significant strides in encouraging best practices for rentals, including guidelines on water usage, septic systems, and noise management.

Eliminating this framework would not only harm the local economy but also undermine these efforts to maintain responsible rental practices. We believe that a business licensing approach could achieve the goals of both regulating short-term rentals and preserving the positive contributions that this sector makes to the community.

4. The Need for a Tailored Approach

Hornby Island is a unique and diverse community that does not fit into a one-size-fits-all regulatory model. We have always valued creative, grassroots solutions that reflect the needs and desires of our community. By adopting a business licensing model through the CVRD, Hornby Island would have the flexibility to craft regulations that are tailored to our specific circumstances, without imposing unnecessary restrictions or burdens on our residents.

This approach would also respect the history and culture of Hornby Island, where short-term rentals have long been a part of the local fabric. We urge you to consider this alternative as a more effective and community-sensitive way to manage short-term vacation rentals, rather than imposing an outright ban that could have wide-ranging negative impacts.

5. A Call for Collaboration with the CVRD

We are encouraged by the CVRD's openness to discussing a potential pilot project for business licensing on Hornby. The collaboration between the Islands Trust and the CVRD could be a model for other islands, enabling Hornby to manage short-term rentals in a way that is both effective and community-friendly. We urge the Hornby Local Trust Committee to take



advantage of this opportunity and work together with the CVRD to develop a practical, tailored solution that ensures the responsible regulation of vacation home rentals on Hornby Island.

6. The Mandate of the Islands Trust

We would also like to remind the Local Trust Committee of the Islands Trust's founding mandate, as established in 1974 under the Islands Trust Act, which directs the organization to:

"...preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of residents of the trust area and of the province generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the Government of British Columbia."

In line with this mandate, we believe the Island Trust has an obligation to support solutions that not only protect the environment and community but also enable local residents to thrive economically. By collaborating with the CVRD to establish a business licensing framework, the Island Trust can both preserve Hornby's unique character and address regulatory concerns in a way that benefits all parties involved.

Conclusion

We respectfully ask that the Island Trust reconsider the current direction of regulating short-term rentals and explore the potential of a business licensing program through the Comox Valley Regional District. Such a program would enable the Hornby Island community to continue renting homes legally, provide a clear framework for regulation, and ensure that Hornby's tourism industry remains sustainable and responsible. This approach would reduce the burden on Islands Trust staff and resources while achieving the regulatory goals that are important for the community.

We hope that the Islands Trust will follow through on its February 2, 2024 motion and consider this alternative approach that reflects the values and needs of Hornby Island. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to your response and working together to find a solution that benefits both the community and the environment of Hornby Island.

Sincerely,

John Heinegg
Chair, Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation