

From: C & S Aitchison [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 3:24 PM
To: northinfo <northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca>; Sonja Zupanec <szupanec@islandstrust.bc.ca>
Subject: Hornby Matters

To the Island Trust Staff,

We write to you as property owners and community members who care deeply about the future of Hornby Island. First and foremost, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for the considerable time, dedication, and personal commitment you invest in serving this community. The work of the Islands Trust is not taken lightly, and we recognize that each decision you make is undertaken with the well-being of the island in mind.

As a demonstration of our commitment to responsible stewardship, we have followed the Trust's guidance diligently in bringing our cabin into full compliance. We have invested substantially in upgrading our water systems, septic infrastructure, and rainwater collection in accordance with current bylaws and best practices. We mention this not to seek recognition, but to illustrate the good faith with which many property owners approach their responsibilities on this island. We are proud to contribute to the environmental integrity that makes Hornby Island such a remarkable and cherished place. For context, we rent our cabin for an average of seven weeks per year over the allowed period; the remainder of our time is split between Hornby and our home in Victoria, and the island is very much a part of our family's lives, not simply an investment.

It is with this same spirit of good faith that we raise a question we hope the Trust will consider constructively: we are not certain that the full body of research and data needed to support a decision of this magnitude has yet been made available to the public. We recognize that the Trust will have given this matter considerable thought, and we do not doubt the sincerity of that effort. However, to our knowledge, no study has been formally presented or made accessible to the public that quantifies the economic impact of short-term rental activity on Hornby Island, or that establishes a clear relationship between short-term rentals and the island's housing challenges. We would welcome the opportunity to review any such analysis, and we gently encourage the Trust to share the evidence base

upon which this decision rests — both to build community understanding and to ensure that the policy is as well-grounded as possible.

This concern is made more acute by a figure cited during the Trust's recent zoom meeting: by one trustee's own estimate, approximately 51(?) short-term rentals on Hornby Island are currently operating illegally — in violation of existing bylaws that are already on the books. We do not raise this to be adversarial, but because it points to a straightforward and far less disruptive course of action that has not yet been meaningfully pursued. If the Trust's intent is to reduce the number of active short-term rentals on the island, enforcing existing bylaws would, by that same estimate, reduce the rental pool by over half — without penalizing a single property owner who has played by the rules. We respectfully submit that before introducing sweeping new restrictions that will impact compliant operators and the broader island economy, the Trust should first demonstrate a commitment to enforcing the regulations that already exist. To do otherwise is to ask law-abiding property owners to bear the burden of a problem created by those operating outside the law.

We also wish to draw attention to the broader economic ecosystem that short-term rentals support on Hornby Island. The revenue generated by these properties does not leave the island in the way that was suggested. On the contrary, it circulates directly and meaningfully through the local economy — sustaining the livelihoods of housekeepers, property managers, maintenance trades, landscapers, local grocery and hardware stores, restaurateurs, and a host of other small businesses and independent operators who depend on visitor activity to remain viable year-round. Many of these individuals are permanent island residents who rely on this income to live and work here. A policy that sharply curtails short-term rental activity will have a cascading effect on this network of community members, and that impact deserves careful and thorough consideration before any regulation takes effect.

We also urge the Trust to reconsider the current seasonal restrictions on short-term rentals, as the current framework appears to produce outcomes that are contrary to both environmental and community interests. Restricting short-term rentals to summer months and some shoulder season — precisely when the island's water resources are at their most constrained and the population / ferry pressure is already at its peak — runs counter to sound environmental stewardship. If the goal is to manage the island's carrying capacity, concentrating visitor accommodation into the driest and most stressed period of the year

is not the solution. A more thoughtful, year-round approach would aim to distribute visitor impact more evenly and alleviate pressure during the critical summer season.

Furthermore, restricting short-term rentals to summer months entirely overlooks the vital role that off-season accommodation plays in supporting Hornby Island's year round cultural and community events. Events such as the Herring Festival and the recently established 50K trail run draw visitors who are deeply aligned with the island's values — people who come specifically for what makes Hornby Island unique. Without accessible, regulated short-term rental accommodation during these periods, visitors and event participants will have extremely limited options - especially those without a tent. The practical consequence is not that these events will go unattended or that guests will stay elsewhere — it is that accommodation will simply go underground, operating outside any regulatory framework, beyond the reach of the very bylaws and oversight mechanisms the Trust has sought to establish. A policy that inadvertently drives accommodation activity into informal and unregulated channels serves no one's interests.

Beyond the questions of data, enforcement, and seasonality, we are concerned that the decision to restrict short-term rentals to principal residences only is overly broad in its design. While we understand and appreciate the intent to address housing availability and community character, this policy fails to distinguish between meaningfully different categories of property. Non-principal residence properties — including seasonal cabins and recreational holdings that have existed on Hornby Island for generations — have never competed with the residential rental market. They are not the source of the housing pressures the Trust has identified, and treating them as such risks penalizing property owners for a problem they did not create. We urge the Trust to revisit this distinction and craft a more targeted approach that addresses the actual drivers of housing concern without casting so wide a net.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important role that Hornby Island's professional vacation rental companies and property managers play in the short-term rental landscape. These hardworking operators have served as genuine ambassadors for this island — introducing ferry weary visitors to its unique character, natural beauty, and community values. Equally important, they have acted as responsible stewards of the properties in their care and of the Island, educating guests on conservation and waste, actively monitoring guest behaviour, enforcing compliance with local bylaws, and

addressing concerns before they escalate. They are, in a very real sense, the first line of accountability for short-term rental activity on Hornby Island. A policy that eliminates or severely restricts their operating environment does not simply affect their businesses — it removes the very people who have been doing the work of ensuring that short-term rentals are managed responsibly, legally and in keeping with community expectations. They are your good neighbours.

In light of the above, we respectfully urge the Trust to pause implementation of this policy and undertake a genuine, data-driven review before it takes full effect. Specifically, we ask that any economic research or evidence informing this decision be made publicly available for community review, that existing bylaws be actively enforced as an immediate and proportionate first step, and that a formal consultation process — inclusive of property owners, local business operators, and professional rental managers — be established prior to finalizing any new regulatory framework.

We remain committed to working constructively with the Trust toward policies that protect the island's environment, support its permanent residents, and sustain the vibrant community that makes Hornby Island so special. We thank you again for your service and for the consideration you will give to the concerns raised in this letter.

Respectfully,

Scott and Christina Aitchison

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