

From: Valerie Neaves [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 7:35 AM
To: SSInfo
Subject: Personal Letter from resident of Salt Spring - Housing
Attachments: letter to Islands Trust.pdf

Please see letter attached.

Thanks,
Val Neaves

Islands Trust
4 – 121 McPhillips Ave
Salt Spring Island, BC
V8K 2T6

October 7, 2025

Dear members of the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Council,

As a long-time Salt Spring resident, working community member, mother, and grandmother, I am writing to share my deep concern for the well-being of our island — both its people and its environment. I care deeply about this place we call home, and I believe we can move forward in a way that nurtures our natural surroundings while also supporting the real human needs that are growing more urgent every day.

I know the conversation around housing on Salt Spring has been difficult and at times divisive. There is a sense that we are being asked to choose between protecting the environment and building the affordable housing our community so desperately needs. But I believe this is a false choice. We can — and must — do both.

There is, in fact, much we already agree on as a community. We agree that:

- **We need workforce housing.** Our island depends on the people who live and work here. Farmworkers, healthcare workers, teachers, service workers, young families, and seniors all need safe, stable, and affordable homes in order for our community to thrive.
- **We must plan for climate resilience.** Housing decisions today must be made with tomorrow's climate in mind. Future development should be built to withstand — not contribute to — wildfires, floods, and other climate risks.
- **We support diverse, clustered housing models.** Eco-villages, co-housing, co-operative housing, net-zero builds, tiny homes, and multi-unit developments — when designed thoughtfully and with care for the land — offer affordable, sustainable alternatives that protect green space and ecosystems.
- **We need walkable, connected neighbourhoods.** Creating communities where people can live, work, shop, and access services without relying on cars is essential to reducing our environmental footprint and creating inclusive spaces that work for everyone — from young families to elders to people living with disabilities.
- **We must respect Indigenous leadership.** Collaborative planning with local First Nations and Tribes, particularly in culturally and ecologically sensitive areas, must be a priority.
- **We need strong local food systems.** Housing and land-use decisions should go hand-in-hand with protecting farmland and improving access to local food production. Supports for and cooperation with Farmland Trust is a good starting point.

Because I support these principles, I am writing in support of the “Common Ground Consensus for the Future” report submitted to the LTC — a thoughtful and balanced package of community-led proposals for the Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw revisions. This proposal reflects input from a diverse group of Salt Spring residents and aligns with the LTC’s own framework for evaluating housing solutions. It has also been reviewed by a planner to ensure legal and practical feasibility.

Importantly, the Common Ground Consensus highlights the urgent need to support innovative and sustainable housing models — such as green, net-zero co-housing and co-operative housing — that are both environmentally sound and socially supportive. These models offer exactly the kind of solutions we need right now, and I urge you to prioritize them in upcoming planning decisions.

Given the short window for public engagement in this process, I believe the work already done through the Common Ground initiative should serve as a foundation for future OCP-LUB revisions.

Thank you for your time, your efforts, and your care in representing all Salt Springers.

In community,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Val Neaves".

Val Neaves, M.Ed
Salt Spring Island