

**From:** Colin Coe <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 2:22 PM  
**To:** SSIInfo; Laura Patrick  
**Subject:** Planning changes

Dear Ms Patrick, Islands Trust and Planning Department:

I am writing this letter in response to the ongoing and relentless campaign to increase the population of Salt Spring by a group of housing activists.

- The increased demand for housing on Salt Spring is largely driven by those wishing to escape an urban environment not to pursue employment opportunities. Over the past decade there has been no new industry on Salt Spring - other than short term vacation rentals and seasonal tourism. Most of the pressure for new housing is NOT driven by employment based migrants. The demand by those employed on Salt Spring requires a very limited number of housing units but this demand is being distorted to justify a complete overhaul of our planning process - and elimination of the environmental protections that have served our island so well in the past.
- Unlike retirees who typically have adequate resources to secure housing, the cohort of new and aspirational residents have limited resources and demand "affordable" housing. Affordable is defined by their ability to pay. They are looking to escape urban areas and have limited resources as most were previously renting. Many have limited or no equity. They are looking to Salt Spring as a quieter and lower cost alternative to their urban life. This is understandable but is this realistic?
- The assumption that housing on Salt Spring should be more affordable than the urban areas they are refugees from does not make sense:
  - Employment opportunities on Salt Spring are limited and typically lower paying jobs than one would find in an urban area. This limits their ability to afford housing.
  - All materials required for construction require shipment from the BC Mainland - to Vancouver Island and then to Salt Spring. The cost of materials therefore is higher than in more developed urban areas.
  - Housing construction is cyclical and as a result the labour - trades required are not sufficient on Salt Spring to meet an active market cycle. As a result labour and trades must also be imported to meet short term spikes further increasing the cost of construction. So our cost of labour is as high or higher as well.
  - Land is limited on Salt Spring and so serviced building lots are limited.
- The "solution" offered by housing advocates is to dilute and degrade the planning regulations and zoning that have been long established in order "to meet the housing crisis". A crisis which they have created by choosing to move to an island with limited

housing stock, limited resources and a higher construction cost structure than the areas they are moving from.

- Many of those who want to move to Salt Spring have lived their life in urban communities. A number of these individuals are experienced professional activists with decades of lobbying activism. They are experienced in creating public pressure campaigns - and in using social media to advance their goals. Historically the Gulf Islands has seen little involvement from its citizens and property owners as they have assumed that their elected officials and bureaucracy are aligned with their desire to see the Gulf Islands "preserved and protected". Non resident and seasonal property owners are effectively given no voice in the future of the community as mail-in ballots are not offered.
- This has changed the political landscape with experienced urban activist groups easily able to manipulate, influence, bully and control our island's decision making process.
- An example of the influence of an urban activist organization would be Salt Spring Solutions : the co- founder is a highly experienced environmental activist who is well versed in creating lobbying campaigns. No doubt this is effective but does this reflect the wishes of the broader community?
- Unlike those who moved to Salt Spring respecting its values inherent in the "Don't change Salt Spring, Let Salt Spring Change You" the new mantra is "Change Salt Spring Because We Demand That You Make Room For US". Coming from a densely populated urban area the perception of what is "wild" and "protecting nature" is informed by their experience. The environmental degradation that concerns many residents is inconsequential to those coming with an urban perspective.
- It is telling that complaints levelled by these urban activist groups that those who want to protect the environment on Salt Spring are just "NIMBY's". This is precisely the language used by corporations and industry to discredit those who want to limit development to protect the environment. This should not be surprising as the objectives are exactly the same - to exploit the environment in order to serve human needs. The former does it for self serving profit - the latter group is also self serving as well - to realize their demand for housing that they can afford in a non urban environment. The harm caused to the environment is the same however.

The macro forces driving this are not difficult to understand - the surge in immigration in Canada has resulted in unsustainable pressure on urban areas. New Immigrants to Canada will mostly want to move to areas where there is employment and where there are a wide variety of services and amenities available. The impact of this has been a desire by some to move from urban areas to nearby - desirable communities which will overwhelm the understandable limited resources available in a small semi rural community like Salt Spring. Many residents now go to Sidney - North Saanich for medical, dental, personal services (hair etc) and shopping as availability on Salt Spring is either delayed or unavailable. Typically our ferries are at or over capacity in the mornings and on return in the afternoon. Our island is already over capacity in many respects.

Many long term residents have outlined the damage and threats to our environment due to rampant development. Yet the housing activist community portrays the desire of existing long term residents to protect the environment as "outdated or obsolete" and that significant growth is justified. Many of those advancing significant growth for Salt Spring come from the environmental activist community. For them protecting the environment is limited only to reducing global emissions. Sacrificing the local environment is simply acceptable collateral damage. The environment is important to them until such time as it conflicts with their self interest. .

I would ask the Islands Trust - and our planning groups to stand strong against the relentless pressure from these groups and recognize the damage that it will do to our island, our environment and recognize the underlying hypocrisy of their position.

Let us have growth - but carefully managed growth that is consistent with the spirit and intent of the Islands Trust mandate - not the distorted view of a self-serving group.

Sincerely,

Colin Coe  
Fulford Harbour