

Trustees,

We are opposed to your ongoing efforts to reduce the 20-foot side lot setback to 10 feet and your well documented commitment to increase house size limits for the following three reasons.

Land.

The land we are living on is ecologically unique and culturally sacred. The mandate of the Islands Trust is to "...preserve and protect the Trust Area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust Area and British Columbians generally..."

When we talk of the land, we must include all of the magnificent beauty and natural bounty that abounds here. It includes the foreshore and coastline that is coming under threat from climate change to the trees many of which are dying from the intensifying drought and flood swings with our changing climate. It includes the varied wildlife and all the species, some of which are rare and endangered, that are already being squeezed out by accelerating development. Trustees' proposed setback and house size plans will intensify that acceleration.

The land here is also culturally sacred. Coast Salish peoples have shared this land for well over 5,000 years. The WSÁNEĆ creation story for S,DÁ,YES/Pender Island tells us that when XÁLS created what is now called the Southern Gulf Islands, he reminded the people that the Islands are their "Relatives of the Deep - TĒTĀĆES". As former Tsawout Band Chief Dr. Nick Claxton reminds us:

The Islands, our relatives, have provided a way of life for our people for thousands of years and WSÁNEĆ law creates a reciprocal relationship of care between WSÁNEĆ and TĒTĀĆES. — "This responsibility is absolute; we are obligated to care for these islands, not only through our own actions but by protecting the islands against harmful actions by others."

Hereditary Chief Eric Pelkey has generously shared this important vision with trustees at the January 17th LTC meeting. We must do our best to respect and embrace this sacred cultural legacy. The Trust preserve and protect mandate reinforces our reciprocal stewardship responsibilities in the Trust Area. Your setback and house size changes are inconsistent with this imperative to protect the land.

People.

The connection between people and the land is a complex and intimate relationship, often encompassing a sense of belonging, a source of sustenance and livelihood, a cornerstone of cultural identity, and a duty to care for the land.

That relationship to the land involves more than the desires and preferences of those of us who are privileged to own property on the land today. It also includes the people who came before us including the WSÁNEĆ People whose long presence on the land holds important lessons for us. It includes the settlers and homesteaders who helped shape our community infrastructure and who laid the foundation for our current unique rural community values. It also includes those who are not yet here, our future generations, our community's grandchildren.

Our **OCP Vision Statement** speaks to our obligations to future generations when we are planning for our community's growth and development:

Our South Pender community is committed to preserve the rural nature and natural diversity of our island environment for future generations.

The trustees' plan to decrease setbacks and increase house size will serve to erode the integrity of our historic rural community and undermine our promise to future generations.

Culture

Regulatory bylaws help shape the values that guide our relationship to the land. However, it is the established community values that provide the foundation on which the regulatory bylaws must be designed and implemented. It is the community's cultural values that ensure that the regulatory laws guide our land use behaviour and promote sustainable outcomes.

One of South Pender's key community values is supporting and maintaining our community's rural lifestyle. The first and perhaps most important community goal in our OCP is:

To maintain the island's rural character so community members and visitors may continue to enjoy a sense of tranquility, privacy, freedom from disturbance, and relative self-sufficiency within a visually attractive environment (OCP 2.2.1 p. 5)

Our Official Community Plan points out that South Pender is one of the least populated and least developed of the Island Trust's major islands. The recent census shows that South Pender has experienced a significant increase in population - 27% between 2016-2021 - highest in the Trust. The pressure for accelerated growth and development is intensifying.

One of our key OCP goals is:

To ensure land use, development, and associated servicing are compatible with the rural island character and that their growth is gradual and sustainable. (2.2.4 p. 5)

Section 478(2) of the *Local Government Act* states that all bylaws enacted by trustees must be consistent with the Official Community Plan. The trustees' plan to reduce setbacks and increase house size is inconsistent with this important goal in our OCP, particularly when the pressure for accelerated growth and development is intensifying.

We are living in a time of flux where uncertainty is a shadow that seems to follow us everywhere we turn. In these challenging times maintaining stability at the community level provides an essential source of community resilience. Our OCP is the foundation of our community's stability ensuring that land use development and growth are gradual and sustainable.

We urge trustees to pause their efforts to reduce side lot setbacks and increase house size allowances. Failure to do so will call into question your legal obligation to enact bylaws that are consistent with our Official Community Plan.

Thank you for considering our views.

Monica and Paul Petrie

