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Subject: Please postpone first reading of the Islands Trust Policy: Your policy is fatally flawed

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Dear Trustees,

While your overall goals - to promote reconciliation, improve housing and to fight climate change in the Gulf Islands - are laudable, your policy document is currently fatally flawed and should not go to first reading until you have properly consulted with Island residents and, importantly, with experts:

1. Many of your policy recommendations are poorly worded, leading to unintended consequences:

- For example, one of your recommendations reads "Docks will not be permitted, unless the property is only accessible by boat". This vague wording could easily be misinterpreted as prohibiting already installed docks, leading to economic carnage and a destruction of real estate and tourism. If you mean new dock installations, you should say so. You would still face massive opposition, but at least this would be a better worded recommendation. Similar egregious errors can be found in the housing, agriculture and other sections. Your document is not ready for a first reading!

2. Your policy is meant as a long-term strategic planning guide, but you have only relied on short term solutions so far:

- For example, you recommend prohibiting desalination plants, based on a limited look at current desalination plant technology, yet new non-polluting solutions are already available. Basing your recommendation on the old, polluting plants such as the ones in the Middle East is myopic. New nanofiltration membranes can filter seawater without pollution, and metamaterial technologies are making desalination possible on both individual homes and group installations.

3. You have primarily focused on prohibitions, where proactive solutions are economical and effective:

- Why focus on prohibiting desalination yet ignore far more important solutions like rainwater catchment?

4. You are trying to force a one-size-fits-all, centrally managed solution where individual islands have radically different situations and needs?

- Some islands like Salt Spring have larger ability to absorb large housing complexes, where Mayne Island is already over developed and have limited water. It makes no sense to have the same housing and water requirements.

- Equally, a centrally controlled budget, managed by planners without clear knowledge of rural, let alone island, issues is a recipe for disaster, even if it makes the trust's jobs easier.

5. Crucially, you have only gathered a collection of recommendations without looking at how they contradict one another:

- You want to preserve waterways and guard against climate change, but also want to prohibit shore wall and artificial reef construction. So what will happen when water levels rise and coastal erosion accelerates? Are we supposed to let the islands fall into the ocean? Already, Mayne Islands has seen landslides threaten the only road that encircles our island. If we can't shore up that coast, we could lose access to our homes. You need to rethink how your recommendations interact.

- Equally, you want to prevent new docks from being built, but you also want to limit marinas from being developed. Where are islanders supposed to park and use their boats. How is fishing and tourism supposed to operate? And how are large marinas more ecologically sound than individual docks? For that matter, if you want to limit private boating in a misguided attempt to preserve the ecosystem, why are you not improving ferry services and other forms of transport? Again, you need to look at how different recommendations contradict one another.

6. Lastly, you have failed to incorporate crucial threats and opportunities in your policy document:

- The recent heat wave and consequent wildfires continues to highlight forest and fire risk management as a key threat and opportunity. While few would recommend aggressive forestry exploitation and clear-cutting as in the past, there is an acute need to manage fire risk by allowing both homeowners and municipalities to manage trees, especially cutting dead trees and eliminating fire risks. To prohibit tree cutting would be an extreme over-reaction and the kind of mistake that could end in tragedy, as many islands lack sufficient fire departments to respond quickly enough in case of wildfire.

- Deer overpopulation is causing massive ecological damage, as new, slow-growing trees like Arbutus are being decimated, yet nothing has been addressed in the policy.

- Water conservation and especially rainwater catchment is the kind of no-brainer solution that really should be a core plank of your climate change strategy, yet it is not yet included in your policy.

- Energy conservation, power systems resiliency and generally electrification should be addressed, as the whole of islands trust territory is subject to frequent outages. Equally, improved access to telecommunications and ferry transport are far more important priorities.

Everyone appreciates the work that the Island Trustees is doing. And we understand your desire to move forward expeditiously. But it's clear that your current thinking, let alone your policy draft document, is failing to capture the concerns of residents.

I urge you, in the strongest of terms, to vote against a first reading of this document on July 8. Please re-initiate consultations and gather feedback. It is clear that you are out of steps with the needs of your constituency.

Many of us are standing by to work with you to draft a better, more effective, productive and sound policy, a policy that will enable the Gulf Islands to thrive in the coming decades.

I hope you listen to your constituents and delay this first reading.

All the best,

Nicolas Kojey-Strauss
Mayne Island resident, homeowner and taxpayer

