

This letter was published in Saturna Island's local paper, the Saturna Scribbler, authored by Lee Middleton. Trustee Lee Middleton is in his second term as a local trustee for Saturna Island. He has lived on Saturna Island for 12 years and before that, Salt Spring Island for seven. Lee has a business specializing in Certification of Human Competence with a specialty in crane operations. A long-time President of the Saturna Net Coop*, he believes that the better connected the Islands are, the healthier the economies and environments can be. Lee is a strong advocate of the Trust using its mandate to further ocean protection in the Trust Area.

“My fellow Trustee, Mr. Brent, has eloquently written elsewhere in this issue about the problems with lack of community consultation and seemingly from the hip policy making of the current draft of the Islands Trust Policy Statement Review. I want to explain here why I don't think this draft document works for Islanders and the Environment of the Islands in its current state. Why the need to explain the draft rather than reject it? Well as one well known Islander recently put it to Paul and I: “This happened on your watch!”. How did this state of affairs come to pass?

Basically this ‘revised draft’ of the Policy Statement is almost entirely new. It is no longer an evolution of a previous document - which is guiding policy document with a defined reference role that adjusts to the times through incremental revision - and as a new document has become divorced from its purpose. What is the Purpose of the Policy Statement? It is a set of principles and strategies which the Trust puts on record as the preferred means for achieving the Preserve and Protect mandate - preserving and protecting the Islands in the Salish Sea for residents and for all British Columbians. The current version of the Islands Trust Policy Statement was written in 1994 and is serviceable but admittedly out of date in some areas such as adapting to a changing climate and consulting more meaningfully with First Nations as part of a broader based Reconciliation Initiative.

Many Trustees, and I dare say the majority of Trustees, have always viewed the policy statement as a document to update rather than fully revise. Incorporating climate change response policies and Reconciliation policies has always seemed quite doable for a time when the organization needed policy not contemplated in the 1994 document. The appetite for wholesale revision during the past four terms of Trustees - almost 13 years - has been pretty minimal. It just wasn't a priority as the way it was written really wasn't negatively affecting the business of the Trust day to day. I'm sure there are Trustees who would disagree with this statement but the fact remains that three terms ago the Trustees voted to turn down funding of several hundred thousand ‘gas tax’ dollars to engage in a review of the policy statement. At the time, and Mr. Brent was one of the dissenting Trustees, it just didn't seem like the best use of tax dollars - the revision wasn't seen as urgent. Subsequent interest from Trustees has been low. But Staff - no doubt for their own good reasons some of which are articulated in the draft - have continued to be very eager to revise the policy statement. In fact, that project did get budget approval about four years ago - but in the face of Luke warm Trustee interest the only way the initiative received funding was through the projects' inclusion in an omnibus funding bylaw. I don't believe a project solely focused on a wide-ranging review of the policy statement and not wrapped in other work and initiatives would have ever received majority council support. I'm not sure that the review project at this late stage even now enjoys majority support, as it has largely unfolded in the background and behind the scenes without close involvement of the politician's who must pass it into law on behalf their constituents. How did that happen?

The review was begun as a wide-ranging outreach to Islanders to solicit their views on what they wanted the Islands to look like in 2050. Some of you may remember a widely distributed survey and public outreach in 2019. The results of this outreach were reported on and the general view of Islanders was that in thirty years they wanted to see healthy communities thriving in an intact and healthy ecosystem. A view Islanders 30 years ago would certainly have recognized and endorsed. At this point I think Trustees were expecting these views would be drafted into a revised Policy Statement as an incremental revision of the largely sound 1994 document. The work was interrupted by the pandemic and Trustee's attention went elsewhere while staff worked behind the scenes authoring a revised document under the guidance of a Committee of Trustees drawn from Trust Council. This Committee wrestled with updating priorities and from what I understand spent considerable time debating the balance of community supports with environmental protection - not an easy task. All of these activities - whether welcome or not - at least resembled a politically connected policy development exercise. However, what was subsequently revealed as a draft for consideration by Trust Council in May - apparently already having been reviewed by First Nations Government contacts and other stakeholders - was a radical departure in many ways from what had gone before. It is very hard to

see how the Islands 2050 consultation was taken into account in the drafting of this revised - really completely rewritten - policy statement. Because of this it is hard to see Islander's views broadly reflected in this document and as a result hard for many Trustees to explain and back it with the confidence of knowing it was a document carefully shaped through consultation. The priorities of the Islands 2050 consultation, ostensibly to guide the Policy Statement Review, just flatly didn't make it into the revised draft document now being considered for first reading.

Further from the consultation that did take place with First Nations who have an historical attachment to the Trust Area it is also hard to see how First Nation's input has shaped the revised draft as a policy document - the aspirations of First Nations in the draft appear more as visionary statements than concrete principles to guide policy. In regard First Nations endorsement of the principles in the draft the language is so broad as to permit everything and permit nothing using criteria drawn from 'Social Science', 'Local knowledge' and 'Indigenous Knowledge Holders' - terms repeated frequently but rarely linked to a specific direction policy should take acting on these types of broadly defined 'ways of knowing'. I'm not sure how such broad wording gives First Nations a meaningful place in the document to guide future policy development but this is something that would be very helpful for the cause of Reconciliation to go into more detail on. The current draft document reads as divorced from any kind of context that public, stakeholders and Trustees can use to make sense of it, learn from it and hopefully embrace it, for surely that must be the goal of the Trust's foundational policy document. There is a barrier to the average reader's making sense of the document raised repeatedly throughout this draft; this is the writer's attempt to be highly inclusive, as mentioned earlier, of different types of knowledge about the natural environment: criteria are presented for deciding on what is evidence that should lead to action that range from 'best available science' through 'social science' through to 'Indigenous Ways of Knowing'. Including these differing varieties of knowledge for every decision area generally makes it very hard to understand what the document is actually proposing to do in the face of climate change or community sustainability or reconciliation. In mine, and I'm sure some other Trustee's view, this means the document lacks needed clarity and will require a lot of work to bring it into the 'realm of the possible' where it can actually affect policy decisions. Some of the draft's goals are commendable, some read as arbitrary without an included rationale, and all need sharpening with a reference to actually proposing specific policy guidance based on evidence - however defined. Engaged and considered consultation would have helped draft a more purpose fit document and that is what must now happen.

In my view getting a workable and publicly endorsed document from here means taking the principles outlined in the draft to the Islands and their communities, inclusive of Indigenous Peoples, for consultation; further explaining how First Nations see benefit through this document to help gather support for principles of Reconciliation on the Islands and just generally working very hard through public engagement to bring this work back into the context that the 1994 policy document framed and connect the threads of past aspirations with a hopeful future vision. Only then will we have something whole and serviceable that Islanders can support. Right now despite perhaps best intentions we have a document very much divorced from the needs of the Islands' ecology and people that cannot serve as a policy guide to 2050. Please make your voice heard on this - its important consultation happen in as broad a manner as possible and that won't happen without a broad spectrum of Islands speaking up for the best possible policy to guide the Islands we all love through the next 30 years. Further from the consultation that did take place with First Nations who have an historical attachment to the Trust Area it is also hard to see how First Nation's input has shaped the revised draft as a policy document - the aspirations of First Nations in the draft appear more as visionary statements than concrete principles to guide policy. In regard First Nations endorsement of the principles in the draft the language is so broad as to permit everything and permit nothing using criteria drawn from 'Social Science', 'Local knowledge' and 'Indigenous Knowledge Holders' - terms repeated frequently but rarely linked to a specific direction policy should take acting on these types of broadly defined 'ways of knowing'. I'm not sure how such broad wording gives First Nations a meaningful place in the document to guide future policy development but this is something that would be very helpful for the cause of Reconciliation to go into more detail on. The current draft document reads as divorced from any kind of context that public, stakeholders and Trustees can use to make sense of it, learn from it and hopefully embrace it, for surely that must be the goal of the Trust's foundational policy document. There is a barrier to the average reader's making sense of the document raised repeatedly throughout this draft; this is the writer's attempt to be highly inclusive, as mentioned earlier, of different types of knowledge about the natural environment: criteria are presented for deciding on what is evidence that should lead to action that range from 'best available science' through 'social science' through to 'Indigenous Ways of Knowing'. Including these differing varieties of knowledge for every decision area generally makes it very hard to understand what the document is actually proposing to do in the face of climate change or community sustainability or reconciliation. In mine, and I'm sure some other Trustee's view, this means the document lacks needed clarity and will require a lot of

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