

June 28th

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington St.
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

Subject: Reconciliation, Environment, Democracy, Private Property, and Economic Resilience in the Southern Gulf Islands

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Thank you for the important initial actions your government is taking on climate change, reconciliation, and post-pandemic economic recovery.

I am writing from Salt Spring Island, British Columbia. Here in the Southern Gulf Islands (the Islands Trust area), a region-wide central guiding Policy Statement revision, undemocratically drafted, threatens the aims of environmental protection and reconciliation, and is already undermining local sustainable economic resilience, property rights, and safety and security.

This Policy Statement revision, while pertaining to local governance, is of national significance given the importance of honouring the pre-confederate Douglas Treaties. Islands Trust has employed a Senior Intergovernmental Policy Advisor to guide the reconciliation 'pillar' of the revised policy, develop engagement principles, and build relationships with the thirty recognized First Nations on land and marine protection and preservation. Please see this excellent letter claiming that in actuality the First Nations consultation has been inadequate. (Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k3qxFBah_n4m3t3DjWbAPtmET5sMJUhB/view?usp=sharing)

Environmental protection is the second 'pillar' of this policy revision. The widespread weaponization of environmental regulation at the Islands Trust level has led to this pillar being viewed, on the ground, with concern and distrust. For example, people simply do not believe that the ban on even small-scale solar desalination makes ecological sense.

I fully support reconciliation and environmental protection, but neither should be used as an excuse to override democracy. The resident community, landholders, and local business have not been involved or consulted in drafting these policy revisions, and many are alarmed by them. Restrictions are broad and heavy-handed, while property rights and protections for livelihoods are lacking. A petition is being circulated to halt first reading, set for July 8th, until robust public engagement has taken place.

Public engagement is not a requirement of the legislation guiding this policy revision. Fairness and justice require that any policy statement revision democratize future decision-making processes. Instead, the current draft increases the powers of a bureaucracy which undermines democracy through the repressive control of land use permitting and economic sanctions. Democracy requires protections for private property and rural livelihoods, and protections from abuses of power. Further, cracking down on rural livelihoods during this time of post-pandemic recovery undermines the very economic resilience which our nation is counting on.

Please find attached a Citizen's Report entitled *Reconciliation, First Nations Land Use Governance and Protection Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which outlines some ideas regarding how to include stakeholder and community participation in land governance seeking reconciliation. The current undemocratic approach taken by Islands Trust is creating the conditions for community division, resentment and distrust. (Here is a direct link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qZlvhQR4TjkwSxa6tzWi-clr9HpVVw2g/view?usp=sharing>)

Also attached is the delegation I attempted to present to the Islands Trust Executive Council last week (June 23rd, 2021). The delegation was censored in-progress and I was humiliated for having had the audacity to attempt to share my 'experience on the ground' and to convey the 'word on the street'. An undemocratic resolution requiring that the Chair vet any future delegations ensued and was passed unanimously. (Here is a link to the censored delegation: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15jotx4fBGGegqBZG-5GLycK4r1xINxeq/view?usp=sharing>)

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms entitles "the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property, and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law." Surely law which is undemocratically guided lacks legitimacy. Can the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protect us? If not, please strengthen it in the interests of democracy and individual liberty. Reconciliation and environmental protection require a level of public 'buy-in' which can only be accomplished within the context of a participatory local democratic process inclusive of the full range of 'stakeholder voices'.

Thank you for considering the concerns I've raised. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mielle Chandler

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(Rural resident, landholder, and small business owner, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia)

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