

People are part of the environment | Dave Paton

Dear Friends,

I'm contacting all Island Trustees and the executive to implore you to have the subject first reading postponed pending suitable engagement. Why the rush while we are still in pandemic mode and particularly given that this document has been pushed out of the door with indecent haste?

Existing public consultation has been totally flawed and the document is more total rewrite than simple revision. The 2019 consultation survey was a perfect example of narrowly asking only the questions the executive wanted answers to. My reply to almost all of the questions was "this is not the issue" or "why not ask this" or even "allow the answer to be clarified." Instead we got the classic "I've stopped beating my wife" dilemma! Paternalistic in the extreme.

Major features of the original policy statement have been discarded and the individual character of our local OCPs ignored for a one-size-fits-all emphasis on a narrow view of just three criteria. We spent decades refining those plans – yes it's always good to review things but it hurts that our work has been totally trashed. It seems to me as though residents (many belonging to families that have lived here for generations), their businesses and livelihoods are just inconveniences to be legislated out of existence.

All with no attempt at a balance between communities and the environment. A balance that is recognized all over Canada. The Gulf Islands are special but then so is the whole of BC, as are its residents – why do we get to live in a museum while paying our local government to act as curators?

From the tone of the document are we even going to be allowed to live here?

We're pretty much all committed environmentalists – we wouldn't live here otherwise, but our IT executive don't have a monopoly on defining the meaning of the word – there are inputs on Federal and Provincial levels and locals' "way of knowledge" deserves recognition. It is not like the place had been badly managed both before and after the IT was created. In part the only reason there is anything left to preserve and protect on our islands is down to the wisdom of previous generations of property owners. On Saturna development was slow and measured, forests were retained or selectively logged and in the end massive sections of land were donated as a park. Half our island is protected so I guess we must have done something right. We have just 330 residents in a 35km<sup>2</sup> area – hardly evidence of over-development.

The pandemic has been a massively distracting crisis not seen since WW2 so we've not had the usual opportunity to thrash out changes in numerous town hall meetings. I find it particularly sinister that "shall" replaces "should" throughout the document with no allowance for interpretation. It's like suddenly waking up to a bunch of new draconian laws with no chance to mount a challenge. Yes democracy allows us to choose our representatives but it shouldn't allow a small number of them to ram through legislation without consultation. Postpone the reading and talk to us when congregation is possible. I don't trust you to sort it out at subsequent readings. It won't be "all right on the night." It's a mess.

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Dave Paton"