

## **The Islands Trust and housing**

From: Mary Wood

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Subject: **The Islands Trust and housing**

Housing, housing, housing!

I live on Denman Island, within the Islands Trust jurisdiction. The islands trust seems to be exempt from municipal housing mandates. We have a housing crisis on the island and the Islands Trust continues to put up barriers to affordable housing.

You as the current government in power have the ability to pass legislation to require that islands trust remove the barriers to housing.

On Denman Island we are not permitted secondary housing other than by applying for temporary use permit which must be renewed after three years and must be applied for again, going through the whole process from start after six years, where there is no guarantee that it will be approved again. Temporary by definition is not permanent. We need permanent housing solutions. Even on ALR land where the ALC has recently revised the regulations to allow for secondary housing, Islands Trust still requires a temporary use permit.

Long time residents of the island, including people who were born here, lived here all their lives, trying to raise their families here, are either living in so-called illegal housing in trailers, buses, even in their cars, or having to move off island.

In the past couple of years an alarming number of young people, many with families, have had to move away. Those who are renting are at the mercy of their landlords regarding poor living conditions including black water coming from their taps and icy cold conditions in the winter due to poor insulation, leaky roofs etc.

They are afraid to say anything for fear of eviction.

People have been evicted in order to facilitate the landlord's desire for vacation housing.

Those living in so-called illegal housing are also at risk of eviction due to bylaw enforcement. The bylaw enforcement officers do not come along and say, "you must evict this person", they simply say "you must come into compliance with the bylaw". That's their way of saying they're not evicting anybody; however the only way to come into compliance with somebody living on your property in illegal housing is to evict them. If you don't, being not in compliance will cost you a monthly infraction fee until you are in compliance.

On Denman Island there have been two affordable housing initiatives (one specifically for seniors and the other for people who cannot afford market rentals) that have not yet started despite having been initiated over a decade ago. Islands Trust will say they are concerned about housing and looking at

housing options simply because they have done studies over the past decade or two. Those studies have not led to any action. Meanwhile they are considering another study.

We do not want island trust to be in the business of providing housing necessarily. What we want is for them to remove the barriers so that landowners are free to provide housing for those needing it. On Islands other than Denman, bylaws automatically allow for secondary housing on most zones. This is not allowed for on Denman. The Islands Trust should allow for secondary housing across-the-board. They should also accept the new ALC approval for secondary housing on ALR land. Not doing so puts them in opposition to the critical work that needs to be done to provide more housing.

Further exacerbating the situation is that the Islands Trust opted out of the foreign ownership tax and the vacant property tax when it was brought in several years ago to address foreign ownership of properties in BC and properties being left vacant for several months out of the year. The gulf islands have become investment and/or vacation havens for wealthy people, many from out of province and out of country, who leave their vacation or investment homes empty for most of the year, only occupying them for a couple of months or even a couple of weeks during the summer.

Please put a stronger, more focussed lens on this issue within the Islands Trust jurisdiction. The Islands Trust bureaucracy has grown significantly, with a budget of around \$9 million which is insane when compared to other municipalities with a similar population base. Yet they provide little in the way of services that other municipalities do within their budgets. They continue to put up barriers to housing and create more barriers for housing while increasing their budget (taxes we pay) and their staffing levels. Something is very wrong here.

Thank you

Mary Wood,  
Denman Island resident.