



News Release

200 -1627 Fort Street Victoria BC V8R 1H8

Telephone **250. 405.5151** FAX: 250 405.5155

Toll Free via Enquiry BC in Vancouver 604.660.2421. Elsewhere in BC **1.800.663.7867**

information@islandstrust.bc.ca www.islandstrust.bc.ca

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ISLANDS TRUST COUNCIL APPROVES 2007/08 BUDGET

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust Council has approved a new annual budget for 2007/08 that responds to public comments and suggestions the Islands Trust has received about delivering services in three priority areas: Sustainable Environment, Healthy Communities and Excellence in Governance.

“As we move into this new century the Islands Trust Area is faced with a number of new challenges,” said Kim Benson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. “Overall, our rate of population growth was double the Canadian rate of 5.4% and the similar provincial growth rate of 5.3%, according to the most recent Census data released earlier this month by Statistics Canada. In fact, our populations have more than doubled on every major island since the Islands Trust was created in 1974.”

“The trend in the Islands Trust Area also counters the national shift towards urbanization,” Benson said.

Statistics Canada also reported that on average, Canada's rural areas and small towns grew by only one per cent between 2001 and 2006. Fewer than 20 per cent of Canadians lived in small towns and rural areas in 2006.

“These factors, combined with property values that have doubled since 2001, are creating additional pressures ranging from affordable housing and the viability of our communities to dealing with a substantial increase in the number of development applications,” said Benson. “At the same time our island communities depend on the Islands Trust to deliver our provincial mandate to ‘preserve and protect’ the Trust Area in this increasingly complex world – by protecting our environment, managing growth, governing effectively and enforcing bylaws.”

On March 29, Trust Council debated and voted on the budget recommended by its Financial Planning Committee, which deliberated for months on how best to achieve the things communities were asking for – looking at how to increase revenues and improve services without adding costs as well as how to cut current programs in order to fund new ones. Trust Council also considered input from the public on the proposed budget, which the Islands Trust solicited and received earlier in March.

“This budget reflects our commitment to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Islands Trust at all levels,” said Benson. “It will help us to improve the delivery of our current services and provide new support for Local Trust Committee work and bylaw enforcement. It allocates funds to each of our Strategic Plan priorities: excellence in governance, sustainable environment and healthy communities. It will also allow us to reinstate a senior staff position to assist Trust Council in dealing with a number of issues that communities want us to deal with on their behalf, including ferry fare increases, use of Crown lands, climate change and tourism.”

This budget also maintains current operations and addresses decreased funding from the provincial government, forecast inflation and increased legal costs to defend local bylaws.

In total, the Islands Trust budget approved for 2007/08 is \$5.5 million, representing an increase of approximately \$818,000 over the 2006/07 expenditures.

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

To accommodate the overall budget requirements Council endorsed an average increase in property tax of \$9.35 per \$100,000 of assessed property value or 15%. This means a property tax increase of approximately \$37.40 for a typical trust area residential property assessed at \$400,000, for a total of about \$273.00 for Islands Trust taxes this year.

Bowen Island Municipality property owners pay taxes to Islands Trust based on a formula defined in the *Islands Trust Act*. In 2006/07 the Bowen Island property taxes collected were \$156,000, compared to \$178,000 in 2007/08, an increase of 14%. Last year on Bowen Island a typical property assessed at \$547,000 paid about \$79.00 in taxes to the Islands Trust, and this year a typical property would pay about \$84.00.

Islands Trust taxes represent approximately 10 – 14% of the total property taxes paid by property owners in the Islands Trust Area (or about 3% of the tax total for Bowen Island property owners). While taxes are the major source of revenue for the Islands Trust, it also receives funds through the grant from the provincial government and special user charges, such as application fees.

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of independent local governments that represents some 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust is responsible for managing development while preserving and protecting the unique environment of the Islands Trust area. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

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CONTACT

Linda Adams
Chief Administrative Officer
250. 405.5160

Kim Benson
Chair, Islands Trust Council
604. 886-9868