



News Release

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Islands Trust Seeks Input About Upcoming Budget

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust is seeking public input on its proposed budget for 2010-2011. Islands Trust taxes account for approximately 10-20% of the total property tax bill for property owners in the Islands Trust Area. The Trust Council will make a final budget decision at its March 23-25 meeting on Hornby Island. Public input is due by noon on February 19, so the Islands Trust Financial Planning Committee can consider it before finalizing a budget recommendation for Trust Council to consider in March.

The Islands Trust's Financial Planning Committee is looking for feedback on its recommendation that the Islands Trust Council consider a budget of \$6.43 million for 2010-2011. If approved by Trust Council, the proposed Islands Trust budget for 2010-2011 would mean an increase to the Islands Trust's portion of taxes of approximately 4.9 percent, or **\$13.25** for a typical residential property with an assessed value of \$450,000.

The proposed budget responds to comments and suggestions the Islands Trust has received from island communities about:

- the need for land use planning to address the need for affordable and accessible housing on several islands;
- the importance of advocacy to represent island viewpoints to other levels of government about a range of issues, including forestry, groundwater, ferries, marine conservation, aquaculture and agriculture;
- expanding the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) throughout the Trust Area;
- proactive community planning through review of Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws;
- enhancing core services to protect the environment and reduce community greenhouse gas emissions through land use planning and support of community partners; and
- continuing improvements to the bylaw enforcement program.

"Islanders expect us to carry out our provincial mandate and to do so in a cost-effective manner that minimizes pressures on taxpayers," said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "As a local government, we must also undertake a number of mandatory tasks and are faced with cost increases beyond our control. To respond to islanders' requests for more service while keeping cost increases as low as possible, we have reduced spending in a number of other key areas such as computer equipment and improvements to our offices."

The proposed budget would ensure Official Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw reviews can continue on several islands; it would fund important studies, including a review of hazardous slopes on Denman and Gabriola Islands, a groundwater study on Galiano Island, and watershed and harbour studies on Salt Spring Island. Land use planning and application processing services on Salt Spring Island would be enhanced by the addition of a new position. This represents the final phase of service increases originally identified in a 2006 review of the Islands Trust's land use planning services.

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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

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“Islanders will see that we have included a non-discretionary budget increase to fund a new Legislative Services Manager position. This position will coordinate the many mandatory functions of local government that we are obliged to carry out. They include administering elections and by-elections, coordinating responses to Freedom of Information requests from the public, coordinating an Annual Report, ensuring Islands Trust records and archives are properly kept and accessible, developing fair and consistent procedures, responding to new legislation and numerous other mandatory tasks. Because we have no choice but to undertake this work, the alternative would be to refocus existing staff positions to ensure the mandatory work is properly completed. This would mean significantly curtailing important, but optional, Islands Trust programs related to advocacy, First Nations relations, climate change, Crown land acquisition and NAPTEP expansion. The Financial Planning Committee has proposed the new position because islanders have strongly supported these other programs and the Committee does not believe they should be cut from Islands Trust operations.”

The proposed budget will also allow Trust Council to meet public expectations about the need to obtain alternative forms of funding and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with Islands Trust operations.

“Before proposing this budget, our Financial Planning Committee met several times and carefully considered the options for providing the many services our communities ask for throughout the year as well as meeting our legal obligations as a local government,” Malcolmson said. “The proposed budget represents many hours of discussion, debate and difficult decisions. Now we need to hear from islanders.”

The Financial Planning Committee will consider all public input received by February 19 before it finalizes a budget recommendation for Trust Council to consider in March. Trust Council will consider all public input it receives before it debates and votes on the budget on March 24.

Budget details are available from the Islands Trust website at www.islandstrust.bc.ca or directly from the following Islands Trust offices:

1-500 Lower Ganges Road
Salt Spring Island, BC
Phone: 250.537.9144

700 North Road
Gabriola Island, BC
250.247.2063

200-1627 Fort Street
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The Islands Trust welcomes submissions from the public on the proposed budget. To be considered before the Financial Planning Commission finalizes its budget recommendation to Trust Council, comments must be delivered by noon on Friday, February 19 to: Islands Trust Council, Attention: Treasurer at #200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8R 1H8; by fax: 250.405.5155 or by e-mail to: budget2010@islandstrust.bc.ca.

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 preserving and protecting the unique environment of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

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