



News Release

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Islands Trust Looking For Input On Upcoming Budget

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust is seeking public input on its proposed budget for 2008-2009. The Trust Council will make a final decision about the budget at its upcoming quarterly meeting to be held March 12-14 on Hornby Island. Public input is due by March 5.

To accommodate the budget requirements for the upcoming year, the Financial Planning Committee is recommending a budget of \$6.15 million, representing an increase in property tax of approximately \$3.63 per \$100,000 of assessed property value or 5.8%. If approved by Trust Council, this would mean a property tax increase of approximately \$16.35 for a typical residential property assessed at \$450,000. Islands Trust taxes account for approximately 10-20% of the total tax bill for a typical property owner in the Islands Trust Area.

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

- strengthening the Islands Trust's ability to protect the environment through improved mapping and land use bylaws;
- stronger bylaw enforcement;
- more effective and responsive governance;
- better advocacy about island issues with other agencies and levels of government;
- improved delivery of service; and
- more public education and consultation opportunities.

"By following our Strategic Plan, we've been able to deliver almost all of the items we set our sights on this time last year," said Kim Benson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "Our commitment this term has been in three main areas: a sustainable environment, healthy communities, and improved governance. This budget builds on those accomplishments and is intended to allow us to work further toward those goals.

"We've also just completed a very thorough review of the planning services we deliver to each island community," Benson said. "This budget will provide us with some of the resources we need to provide more timely processing of applications and improved bylaw enforcement. It will also allow us to engage environmental and scientific specialists from time to time so that we can better deliver on our mandate to preserve and protect the Islands Trust Area."

Benson noted that Mayne, North Pender, and Mudge Islands had completed reviews of their Official Community Plans and that Salt Spring Island and the Associated Islands for the Gambier Island Local Trust Area were engaged in extensive community consultation processes to review their respective Official Community Plans. Other islands are in line to prepare for upcoming reviews. "We will also continue to advocate on behalf of island communities on a whole range of issues that affect islanders such as ferry fares, greenhouse gas emissions, marine issues and tourism," said Benson.

Benson also highlighted Trust Council's endorsement of the BC Climate Action Plan last fall. "We are committed to taking action in three areas: carbon neutral operations by 2012; measuring and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions in the Islands Trust Area; and fostering energy efficient communities through land use planning."

"This year Trust Council will develop an initial strategy to help meet these commitments," said Benson.

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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

“Before proposing a budget increase, our Financial Planning Committee carefully considered many options to achieve the things our communities have asked for,” Benson said. “The committee looked at how we might increase our revenues and considered how we could improve services without adding costs. In the final analysis, the Committee has recommended a small increase in our overall budget for next year.”

You can get all the budget details 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
Victoria, BC
250.405.5151

The Islands Trust welcomes submissions from the public on the proposed budget. To be considered before the budget is adopted, comments must be delivered by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 5 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: budget2008@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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