



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 2009-2010. The Trust Council will make a final budget decision at its March 10-12 meeting on Gabriola Island. Public input is due by noon on February 16.

The Islands Trust's Financial Planning Committee is recommending a budget of \$6.3 million, representing an increase in property tax of approximately \$1.19 per \$100,000 of assessed property value, or 2%. If approved by Trust Council, this budget would mean a property tax increase of approximately \$5.36 for a residential property assessed at \$450,000. Islands Trust taxes account for approximately 10-20% of the total property tax bill for property owners in the Islands Trust Area.

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

- ◆ land use planning to address the need for affordable and accessible housing on several islands;
- ◆ on-going investments in the accuracy and accessibility of Islands Trust mapping products;
- ◆ enhancing core services to protect the environment through land use planning and bylaw enforcement;
- ◆ positioning island communities to adapt to the changes that scientists predict will result from climate change;
- ◆ reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with Islands Trust operations; and
- ◆ improving stewardship of island protected areas.

"We are determined to minimize pressures on taxpayers while meeting public expectations," said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "At the same time, we need to deal with non-discretionary issues such as inflation and a mandated Provincial 2.5% wage increase. To meet these needs we have reduced spending in a number of areas. For example, we are reducing the budget for Executive Committee meetings and the associated travel costs, which will also help to move our operations towards becoming carbon neutral.

"By making these adjustments we have been able to keep the budget increase at about the same level as inflation. This small increase will improve service to the public on Salt Spring Island by funding a new planner position, a need identified in our 2006 review of the local planning services we provide to islanders. The increase will also fund a new staff position that will help ensure the ecological integrity of the 70 protected properties in the Islands Trust Area that are managed by the Islands Trust Fund.

"We have several island communities that are due for reviews of their Official Community Plans," added Malcolmson. "This budget will support these important community planning exercises."

Malcolmson also noted Trust Council's 2007 commitment to the BC Climate Action Charter, requiring 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.

"We have an initial strategy to make our operations carbon neutral and are working to develop emission reduction targets for inclusion in island OCPs," said Malcolmson.

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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,” Malcolmson said. “The Committee 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. Now we need to hear from islanders, and will consider all input before voting on the budget in March.”

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
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 noon on Monday, February 16 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: budget2009@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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