



News Release

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March 1, 2007

ISLANDS TRUST SEEKS INPUT ON UPCOMING BUDGET

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust is seeking public input on its proposed budget for 2007-2008. The Trust Council will make a final decision about the budget at its upcoming quarterly meeting to be held March 27-29 on Gabriola Island. Public input is due by March 21.

The Islands Trust Council's Financial Planning Committee is recommending a budget 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.

"The Islands Trust Area is facing many new and growing challenges as we move into this new century", said Kim Benson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "Our populations have more than doubled on every major island since the Islands Trust was created in 1974. Property values have nearly tripled since just 2001, creating new issues related to community viability and affordability. Development applications are way up, although our staff levels have remained relatively constant. We have made significant improvements to the way we consult and communicate with the public. At the same time, our island communities have high expectations on many fronts, including environmental protection, growth management, governance, and bylaw enforcement. Trust Council's Financial Planning Committee has carefully considered many options to achieve the things requested by our island communities. It is recommending an increased budget that will position the Islands Trust to meet the challenges of delivering our provincial mandate to 'preserve and protect' the Trust Area in an increasingly complex world."

Benson noted that the Islands Trust Council has worked hard to develop a Strategic Plan so that it can prioritize its objectives and focus resources in a cost-effective manner. The proposed budget is closely aligned with Council's Strategic Plan and allocates funds to each of its three priority areas. For example, to achieve Excellence in Governance, the budget includes significant new funds to the Islands Trust's on-going governance review. Concerning a Sustainable Environment, new programs are proposed for riparian area protection, ecosystem mapping and an initial review of possible climate change impacts.

"Island communities expect us to advocate on their behalf in regard to a whole range of issues that affect the islands; things like ferry fare increases, greenhouse gas emissions, offshore drilling and tourism", said Benson. "Next year's budget will allow us to reinstate a senior staff position to assist Trust Council in this important work. Many agencies and groups make decisions affecting our islands. There is a need for leadership to ensure they consider our provincial mandate. The *Islands Trust Act* assigns that leadership role to the Islands Trust and our citizens continually remind us of how important it is."

"Before proposing a budget increase, our Financial Planning Committee carefully considered many options to achieve the things our communities have asked for," said Benson. "The Committee looked at how we might increase our revenues and considered how we could improve services without adding costs. It also took a hard look at our existing budget to see where we might cut current programs in exchange for new ones."

"In the final analysis, improving the delivery of existing services and providing the new services our communities are asking for will require an overall budget increase next year. The budget proposal, as recommended by the Financial Planning Committee, reflects Trust Council's ongoing commitment to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Islands Trust at all levels."

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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 budget requirements, the Financial Planning Committee is recommending an average increase in property tax of approximately \$9.00 per \$100,000 of assessed property value or 14.5%. If approved by Trust Council, this would mean a property tax increase of approximately \$36 for a typical residential property assessed at \$400,000. Islands Trust taxes account for approximately 10-14% of the total tax bill for a typical property owner in the Islands Trust Area.

Details of the proposed budget are available on the Islands Trust website at www.islandstrust.bc.ca. The budget package can also be obtained 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

Submissions from the public on the proposed budget are welcome. To be considered before the budget is adopted, comments must be delivered by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 21 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: budget2007@islandstrust.bc.ca.

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of independent local governments that represents some 23,000 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 and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

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