



News Release

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March 12, 2009

2009-08-IT

Islands Trust Approves Budget Increase of Less than 1% for 2009-2010

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust Council has approved a new annual budget for 2009/10 increasing taxes by 0.92%. This small increase was arrived at after listening to public input that discussed the current economic situation. Other public input stressed the ongoing need for Islands Trust services. Trustees agreed to cut funding in some areas to make room for a 2.5% wage increase required under the collective agreement and to enable compliance with Bill 27, the Province's new climate change legislation.

"We are determined to minimize pressures on taxpayers while carrying out our mandate to preserve and protect the Gulf Islands," said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "We found ways to reduce spending in areas such as Executive Committee travel and meeting costs, which will also help our operations to become carbon neutral. By making these adjustments we have been able to keep the budget increase to half the level of inflation."

On March 11, 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 have been asking for. Trust Council also considered input from the public on the proposed budget, which the Islands Trust solicited and received earlier in March.

"Before deciding on a budget, our Financial Planning Committee carefully considered many options to achieve the things our communities have repeatedly asked for," Malcolmson said. "We are very happy to announce that we have finally created a property manager position that will help ensure the ecological integrity of the 70 protected areas owned or monitored by the Islands Trust Fund."

Malcolmson also noted Trust Council must comply with Bill 27 which requires that all official community plans be amended by 2010 to include targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction and policies to achieve those targets. "We also 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."

The proposed budget responds to requests from Islands Trust area communities for:

- ◆ land use planning to address the need for affordable housing on several islands;
- ◆ on-going investments in the accuracy of Islands Trust mapping products;
- ◆ environmental protection through land use planning and bylaw enforcement;
- ◆ improved stewardship of nature reserves and protected areas.

To accommodate the budget requirements for the upcoming year, Trust Council has approved a budget of \$6.45 million, representing an increase in property tax of approximately 55 cents per \$100,000 of assessed property value or 0.92 %. This means a property tax increase of approximately \$2.47 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 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. It is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year.

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

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