



## Islands Trust

200-1627 Fort Street Victoria BC V8R 1H8  
Telephone **250.405.5151** Fax 250.405.5155

Toll Free via Enquiry BC in Vancouver 660-2421. Elsewhere in BC **1.800.663.7867**

Email [information@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:information@islandstrust.bc.ca)

Web [www.islandstrust.bc.ca](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca)

January 11, 2008

File Number: FG/04

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon  
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities  
Tower C – Place de Ville 330 Sparks Street  
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Cannon:

### **Re: Opposition to Industrial Freight Offloading in Plumper Sound, British Columbia**

I am writing on behalf of the Islands Trust Council, a federation of independent local governments that represents some 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area. In 1974, the Government of British Columbia created the Islands Trust to protect the islands and waters in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. The significance and sensitivity of the Islands Trust Area and the need for protective measures is internationally recognized. The legislated object of the Islands Trust is *"to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of the province generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the Government of British Columbia."*

The Islands Trust Area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island, including Howe Sound and as far north as Comox. It is a unique and special place composed of 13 major islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering approximately 5200 square kilometres of land and water.

The Islands Trust Council met on December 6, 2007, and passed the following motion:

**That the Islands Trust Council request the Chair to write to the federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities objecting to the offloading of industrial freight such as gypsum in Plumper Sound.**

We understand that your Ministry has jurisdiction over marine anchorages. We are writing to object to the industrial use of anchorages in Plumper Sound, a body of water surrounded by Saturna, Pender, and Mayne Islands. Parks Canada is actively studying the area for inclusion in a new National Marine Conservation Area. Until an NMCA is enacted, are there any provisions available to you to prevent industrial activity in an area designated for special protection under the provincial *Islands Trust Act*?

Freighters anchor in Plumper Sound a few times per month, either to wait for a berth in Vancouver or to offload their cargo to barges in the shelter of the islands. One of the emerging concerns is that some of the freight is not even destined for Canadian customers, but is barged to Seattle. The impacts to nearby residential areas include noise, air and light pollution from the ships themselves as well as dust created by transfer of gypsum to a barge. The transfer process creates large clouds of dust, so thick at times that the ships cannot be seen through them. These dust clouds drift towards the islands while the offloading continues for many hours.

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*Preserving Island communities, culture and environment*

Bowen Denman Hornby Gabriola Galiano Gambier Lasqueti Mayne North Pender Salt Spring Saturna South Pender Thetis

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It was this kind of dust cloud in 1995 which reduced visibility of the deck cargo from the freighter "JACQUES CARTIER" during loading operations so completely that the Sea Span barge capsized and dumped 3500 tonnes of gypsum into Plumper Sound.

Concerned islanders have been writing to a variety of authorities regarding the freighter activities, resulting so far in a response from Federal Minister of Natural Resources Gary Lunn (attached). This letter states that there is no harm to the marine environment from gypsum and therefore no grounds to restrict the activity. We understand that gypsum is indeed harmful if inhaled or if dumped in large quantities as in the case of the 1995 accident. We would like to see these activities restricted.

We would appreciate hearing from you about what measures are available to curtail this activity for the benefit of the human and marine environment in the area the Islands Trust is attempting to protect.

Please feel free to contact our staff at 250-405-5174 if you require more information.

Yours truly,



Kim Benson  
Chair, Islands Trust Council

pc: Islands Trust Council  
Bill Henwood, NMCA Planner, Parks Canada  
Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources and MP - Saanich-Gulf Islands  
Islands Trust website

encl: June 1, 2007 Letter from Hon. Gary Lunn  
Photo of gypsum dust cloud from CSL Freighter

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