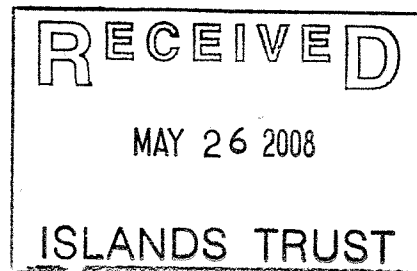




BRITISH  
COLUMBIA



Ref: 127398

MAY 23 2008

Ms. Kim Benson  
Chair  
Islands Trust Council  
200 – 1627 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

Dear Chair Benson:

I am writing in response to the Islands Trust legislative proposals that were forwarded for my review. I appreciate all the work that has been done to develop the governance legislation change proposals including establishing the Islands Trust Council Governance Task Force and completing the Islands Trust Governance Review Report (Report).

The Report came to two important conclusions. First, there may be some governance and service rationale for increasing the size of Salt Spring Island's local trust committee (LTC) from two to four on-island members. Second, the rationale for increasing the size of the Islands Trust Council (ITC) by adding the two additional Salt Spring Island Trustees is less compelling. The Report found that the ITC was never intended to reflect population sizes, area, number of folios or any other measure. The Report went on to conclude that, the "ITC was deliberately designed to give each local area in the Islands Trust the same status and authority, and that giving certain local areas a stronger voice at the ITC would change the entire basis on which the governing body was formed and would risk undermining the ITC's broad focus."

Generally, I am in agreement with the Report's conclusions. That is, there may be some merit to taking steps to advance the first proposal - increasing the size of Salt Spring Island's LTC as a pilot project. As the Report suggests, additional members may:

- reduce reliance on off-island executive committee members when there is a need to break a tie;
- increase the diversity of representation on the LTC, allowing LTC members to bring a variety of perspectives to committee meetings;

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- increase the quorum, which would enable two LTC members to informally discuss matters and exchange ideas without being perceived as improperly convening a meeting of the LTC; and
- ensure that decision making is possible when members are required to remove themselves from discussions in the event of conflict of interest.

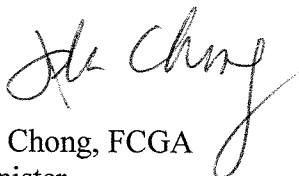
While there may be some benefits to advancing the proposal to increase the number of trustees on Salt Spring Island, I am also aware that the changes proposed by the Islands Trust have generated significant public interest. Residents across the Islands Trust have expressed strong views both for and against the Islands Trust proposal to increase the size of the Salt Spring Island LTC. With such a significant public interest in the matter, residents and locally elected officials may consider it inappropriate to unilaterally modify a local government's structure without confirmation of the residents' perspectives on the proposal.

To address this uncertainty, I propose that the Islands Trust hold a referendum at the time of the local government elections this fall to assess the level of support for the Islands Trust proposal on Salt Spring Island. A majority of electoral support will ensure we can confidently implement the Islands Trust proposal through a subsequent by-election. I recognize there may be additional costs as a result of a by-election, so I would certainly consider what assistance could be available to hold the by-election.

There are many details requiring further consideration, such as the referendum's process, authority for that process, and timing. As well, there would be considerations related to the status of the additional trustees. If the Islands Trust agrees with using the referendum to determine the level of electoral support for the Islands Trust proposal, I would encourage you to work with Ministry of Community Services staff to arrange the referendum and determine how best to address these issues.

Thank you, again, for all the work the Islands Trust has completed towards improving the Islands Trust governance and service delivery.

Sincerely,



Ida Chong, FCGA  
Minister

pc: Honourable Murray Coell, MLA  
Saanich North and the Islands