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This letter was sent to the following newspapers: Active Page, Comox Valley Echo, Comox Valley Record, Driftwood, Gabriola Flying Shingle, Gabriola Sounder, Georgia Straight, Island Tides, Nanaimo Bulletin, Nanaimo Daily News, Times Colonist, Vancouver Province and Vancouver Sun

RE: Islands and bridges

Dear Editor:

Recent discussions regarding the relative monetary costs and benefits of ferries vs. bridges have revolved around using the Gulf Islands as potential “stepping stones” in order to meet certain perceived short-term and expedient transportation needs. The Gulf Islands in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound are internationally recognized for their beauty, tranquility, and unique natural environment. It’s no secret that insatiable demands for increased development resulting from the islands’ proximity to the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island could easily destroy the very values and features that make these fragile and finite islands a national treasure.

In 1974, in response to recommendations of an International Joint Commission and an all-party special committee of the legislature, the government of the Province of British Columbia enacted special legislation to protect the islands. The *Islands Trust Act* establishes the Islands Trust as an autonomous local government with jurisdiction for land use and community planning on the 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands that are within the Islands Trust Area. The Act also gives the Islands Trust a conservation-oriented object to “*preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment*”, not just for residents but for current and future generations of British Columbians.

Together, the 26 elected members of the Islands Trust Council are responsible for adopting a policy framework designed to achieve the legislated object and requirements of the *Islands Trust Act*. The *Islands Trust Policy Statement* is the result of an extensive public consultation process. Its goals and policies reflect the shared values and concerns of the public and the Islands Trust regarding the preservation and protection of the islands in the Trust Area.

“It is Trust Council’s policy that no island in the Trust Area should be connected to Vancouver Island, the mainland or another island by a bridge or tunnel, notwithstanding the existing bridge between North and South Pender Islands” (Islands Trust Council Policy Statement Bylaw, 1993, policy 5.3.2).

To understand the long-term implications of what can happen when an island becomes accessible by bridge, one has only to be reminded that Manhattan (comparable in size to Gabriola, Galiano, Denman, and Bowen) is an island accessible by bridge.

Kim Benson
Chair, Islands Trust Council

Preserving **Island** communities, culture and environment

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