



August 7, 2025

Reference: 185578

The Honourable Christine Boyle,
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs,
Parliament Buildings,
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Email: HMA.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Boyle,

We warmly congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. As long-term residents of the Islands Trust area, we have supported the work of your predecessors, the Hon. Ravi Kahlon and Hon. Nathan Cullen, and look forward to continuing this engagement with you. Our three associations—*Friends of the Gulf Islands*, *Positively Forward* and *Keep Salt Spring Sustainable*—are all working to uphold the purpose of the *Islands Trust Act*.

The BC government's long commitment to the *Trust Act's* "preserve and protect" mandate (the Object) is more urgent than ever amid worsening climate change, wildfires and drought. We believe that strong protection of a healthy environment is essential to the health of human communities now and into the future. While we fully support genuinely affordable housing (regulated and/or non-market) for islanders, we oppose those who seek to use the housing shortage to unleash mass development --the very thing the *Trust Act* was intended to prevent.

It is clear from every governance referendum held on these islands since 2000, and from the environmental focus of members elected by this riding to Ottawa and Victoria over many years, that the great majority of Trust residents support the core purpose of the *Islands Trust Act* and wish it to be steadfastly upheld.

The Islands Trust Council is now undertaking a full review of its Trust Policy Statement (TPS), the key document governing Official Community Plans, land use bylaws and regulatory standards. This review began some five years ago with provincial funding, wide public consultation, and expert independent analysis under the previous Trust Council. But the review has taken an alarming direction since the current Trust Council upended the process after the 2022 elections. Of particular concern is Council's September 2023 in-camera decision to redefine the term "unique amenities" in the Trust Act's Object to include "but not be limited to, housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, and tourism." This egregious shift was made without reference to foundational documents such as the 1986 Ministry of Municipal

Affairs/Islands Trust *Position Paper No.1: The Object of the Islands Trust*, or the 2021 *Discussion Paper: The Islands Trust Object: Past, Present and Future*. The re-interpretation risks broadening the Trust Object so far that it prioritizes anything—and therefore nothing. It amounts to an attempted re-write of the *Trust Act* itself.

We were therefore much reassured by then-Minister Kahlon's letter of April 28, 2025, to the Chair of the Islands Trust Council (**ref 185578, copy attached**). His letter underlined the Trust's core "ecological mandate" to protect the islands' "unspoiled natural amenities," and emphasized that all revisions to the Trust Policy Statement (TPS) must abide by this mandate. We fully support his position that growth must not exceed "the carrying capacity of local ecosystems," and that the TPS review must carefully build towards consensus with the public and the many First Nations who have longstanding rights and interests here.

When the draft TPS received First Reading last week (July 29, 2025), it became clear that the minister's recent guidance has not been followed by Trust Council. Furthermore, important directive wording has been deleted, weakened, and opened to loopholes.

During the consultation period now announced, our organizations will be working hard with our communities to retain a Trust Policy Statement that clearly upholds the ecological priorities established by Dave Barrett's NDP government in 1974. We respectfully ask that we can count on your ministry's continuing support in upholding this proud legacy.

Sincerely,

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