

Dear Trust Council Trustees,

We are writing to voice our concerns about the Policy Statement Amendment Project.

In our view, in spite of its carefully crafted motherhood statements about adhering to the Trust Act's "preserve and protect" mandate, the Amendment represents a radical and perilous departure from the mandate's intent, particularly as spelled out in the previous version of the Policy Statement.

By proposing new priorities—especially with respect to the housing crisis, an area that remains well outside the Trust Mandate, regardless of the truly Orwellian "New Speak" efforts to redefine the meanings of "environment" and "amenities"—the Amendment seeks to deflect attention from what was and is the primary goal of the Trust: sustaining the viability of the life-support systems that sustain us and all other life-forms in the Trust Area.

For over a decade, instead, the Trust as a whole seems to have been intent on undermining and eroding that vision, blurring it in ways that favor the very activities that the Trust was established in the mid-1970s to curb: overdevelopment to the cost of further degradation of our islands' life-support systems. There is absolutely no way to justify this betrayal of the mandate by appealing to "changing times": the times are changing, to be sure—but, with the global impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity, and ecosystem degradation everywhere around the world, they are changing in a way that makes the Trust's Mandate more crucially vital, not less, for livability and indeed survivability on these islands.

The evidence speaks volumes. In our forthcoming first scientific assessment of the health of Salt Spring's ecosystems, we show that all four of our main ecosystems (forests, lakes, nearshore marine, and agroecosystems) are in failing condition, jeopardizing the health and wellbeing of our community. Our assessment makes clear (for Salt Spring, but much the same undoubtedly applies to other parts of the Trust Area) that the health of our ecosystems is precarious because the controls on development—which the Trust was mandated to establish and enforce—have been vastly insufficient to stop the erosion.

The mandate of the Islands Trust was and remains visionary, but a majority of Trustees appears to have lost their way—or perhaps they never found it. To carry out that vision, Trust Council must now urgently refocus on ensuring that its actions are directed to stopping the carnage caused by overdevelopment and are squarely directed to restoring health to our islands' ecosystems and thus restoring health and wellbeing to our communities.

David J. Rapport and Luisa Maffi, Co-Directors, Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy Community Initiative

*As both an economist and an ecologist, **Rapport** led the development of the environmental statistical system at Statistics Canada, a system adopted worldwide for assessing the State of the Environment. He co-authored and co-directed Canada's 1st National State of the Environment Report. As an anthropologist, **Maffi** has devoted herself to learning from Indigenous Peoples and other place-based communities about the interdependence between people and nature and about the worldviews, values, and practices that make their ways of life environmentally and socially sustainable over the long term.*