



News Release

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BC FERRY CUTS IDENTIFIED AS TOP THREAT TO ISLAND ECONOMIES

VICTORIA – At a December 3rd workshop hosted by the Islands Trust Council, coastal community leaders came to a clear consensus that ferry service cuts and rising ferry fares present the greatest threat to island economies.

Sheila Malcolmson, Islands Trust Council Chair said, “This is why we are so disappointed that the Province of BC did no socio-economic assessment of ferry cuts and rate hikes at a time when we are working collectively with communities and different levels of government to strengthen economic sustainability.”

The consensus came out of a workshop on island economic sustainability models. The workshop provided a unique opportunity for 50 island representatives to discuss their roles in island economic sustainability and to share experiences and initiatives. In the Islands Trust Area, zoning for home business and commercial or light industry is decided locally by trustees. Regional Districts have the authority for economic development services.

Those attending included Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, electoral area directors and staff from regional districts, chairs of regional district economic development commissions, presidents of chambers of commerce, a representative of the BC Economic Development Association, members of the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance board as well as staff from San Juan County in Washington State.

Gordon Ganong, Chair of the Bowen Island Economic Development Committee said, "We heard today that coastal communities are in economic decline. The Provincial Government needs to address this as it has in the past for other regions of the Province. The ferry system must be an integral component in shoring up this region."

Li Read, President of the Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce observed that “the real benefit was the shared experience in the room. Even though each island is quite different, we share the same need to sustain people of all ages in our communities and we can only do that by collaborating together.”

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of local government bodies representing 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment and amenities of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

Resource: Those attending the workshop reviewed indicator data pertinent to economic sustainability. It is available for [download](#) from the Islands Trust website.

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis