

# Trustee Notebook

By Laura Busheikin



Islands Trust

## Housing Lessons from Other Islands

Denman's discussion of secondary cottages and suites is now in full flow. As part of that, it's interesting to look at how other Islands in the Trust area deal with this. I asked Trustees from Gabriola, Hornby and Lasqueti how secondary suites and cottages were regulated on their Islands and what the effects were. Here is what I learned:

### **Gabriola (population 4000; a 20-minute ferry ride from downtown Nanaimo)**

*Comment from Gabriola Trustee Gisele Rudisher:*

"When the Islands Trust was established the Gabriola bylaws restricted accessory cottages to lots 5+ acres and limited them to only non-paying guests of the family residing in the main dwelling. In 1997 we changed the bylaws to allow the residential rental [ie no short-term vacation rentals] of cottages on 2+ HA (approximately 5 acres) lots with the intention that they would provide some affordable housing.

"I think the cottages add to the diversity of the community. They are limited to under 65 square metres (approx. 700 sq ft) so they are probably not suitable for families of more than 2 or 3 people at most... For the most part I think they are affordable compared to house rentals.

"The cottages are only allowed on larger lots and are limited in size so it is less likely that there will be negative consequences such as septic contamination or parking problems."

"More recently, landowners are required [by the Regional District of Nanaimo] to put in separate septic services for secondary cottages, making building these for rentals less viable economically.

"It's my opinion that the only truly affordable housing for very low-income individuals or families on Gabriola are illegal sub-standard units (suites, houses, cottages, sheds). Residential units that conform to building codes and septic regulations that are affordable for those with marginal incomes can only be provided if they are subsidized."

*Comment from Gabriola Trustee Sheila Malcolmsen (also chair of Saltspring Island Local Trust Committee)*

"Gabriola doesn't allow B&Bs in accessory cottages, which I think has helped protect them for rentals or family. On Saltspring B&Bs are allowed in guest cottages which has led to a drift toward short-term vacation rentals.

"Saltspring doesn't yet allow guest cottages to be rented for year-round affordable housing [but does allow secondary suites of up to 90 sq metres (approx 1000 sq ft) in designated high-density areas]. Its Official Community

Plan encourages a review of that (and lists criteria) but some provincial agencies were more supportive of suites for affordable housing, over accessory cottages, because they said using cottages as residences increases pressure for small lot subdivisions. We haven't found that here, mostly; I'm just relaying what I heard about Saltspring."

### **Hornby Island (population 1000; two 10-minute ferries from Buckley Bay via Denman)**

Hornby has long allowed two residences on lots of approximately 10 acres and up. The Island is currently considering a change to its housing policies, to allow secondary suites on all lots over two HA, and to allow detached secondary units specifically for affordable, non-permanent accommodation for a relative or a care-giver or to provide affordable housing, to be regulated with a Temporary Use Permit, on lots over two HA.

*Hornby Trustee Tony Law's comment on the proposed new regulations:*

"These new regulations for secondary suites and detached units have come out of about 14 years of discussion and respond to a clear community demand. It's a tricky balance because we already have more density than a lot of islands, but we are small. One third of our island is protected, almost one-third is in the Agricultural Land Reserve, and we have a lot of small lots, which we are not considering for allowing secondary units. So there is a real limit on areas where this can happen

"The use of the Temporary Use Permit allows us to look at this application by application, but is not too onerous for the landowner. On the one hand, we are looking for accountability, but we also want accessibility. If we tip the balance too far in demanding accountability with overly complex requirements, we would sacrifice accessibility. That's the balance we are hoping to find."

*Trustee Law's comments on the current regulations:*

"Hornby has allowed two dwellings on 10-acre lots since way back before the formation of the Trust. So properties were bought by tenants in common [two different owners sharing the land] which definitely made it more affordable. Also it kept property values down, because not everyone wanted to buy into that situation. But there were also a lot of problems associated with that, such as conflicts between landowners and issues with estates and succession.

"As a result, now we are looking at allowing subdivision of those lots. This won't increase density, but it might impact accessibility [through increasing the value

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of those properties].”

**Lasqueti Island (population 425; a 50-minute passenger ferry from French Creek; no car ferry)**

*Comment by Lasqueti Trustee Peter Johnston:*

“Each parcel is entitled to one residence per ten acres, and for each residence, one guest cottage is also allowed. It must be a maximum of 56 sq metres (approx 600 sq ft). We use the principles that owners can't be guests in their own cottages, and that guests don't pay rent.

“We have a fair number, and it's increasing, of people renting out their guest cottages, or of having in effect two residences when only one is permitted. I think this is an increasing problem, but not everyone agrees with me.

“The total number of houses that we could end up with on Lasqueti, legally, under our current bylaws, is something like 1240. If we figure that there are probably 2.5 people per household, on average, that's 3,100

people, and we currently don't have the resources -- ferry service especially -- to manage that many people.

“There probably should be a way for people to have a legal second residence on Lasqueti, at least short-term, but we don't have it yet. Possibly temporary buildings, easily moveable, would be a way to do it.”

*Comment from Lasqueti Trustee Susan Morrison:*

“... these guest cottages often do provide low cost housing for people coming to our island trying to establish themselves. This also causes a problem when the discussion comes up. I do see density as a huge problem for all of these small islands; resources get stretched to the max and the environment suffers.”

*Find further info about housing regulations on other Islands, and much more on this topic, on the Denman Island page of the Islands Trust website ([www.islandstrust.bc.ca/](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/))*

## Teddy Bear Picnic Storytime at the Blackberry Fair

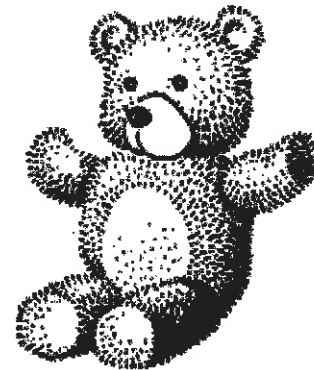
*Submitted by Jean Cockburn and Wendy Wright*

The Dora Drinkwater Community Library will present a special storytime event for young children at the Blackberry Fair on Sunday, September 1 at 11 in the morning.

Children, their teddies, and parents/caregivers are invited to a Teddy Bear Picnic! Join us for 30 minutes of stories, songs, and rhymes about bears, followed by a "picnic" snack of cookies, juice, and fruit.

The picnic will take place on the fairgrounds next to the Community Hall (or in the library if it rains) at 11:00. Don't forget to bring your teddy!

The library now offers an up to date collection of children's and young adult books, and over the summer has been offering Monday morning storytimes. We extend a big thank you to individuals and businesses, in particular to Daryl at the General Store who has donated craft supplies and treats for the storytime activities and to all those folks who put their refundables into the library bin at the recycling centre.



The Dora Drinkwater Library is located in the Denman Island Community Hall and is open 1:30 to 3:30 P.M. Monday to Friday, and 12:30 to 3:30 P.M. on Saturday. Free Wi-Fi internet is available during library hours. The library is closed Sunday and statutory holidays. Staffed by volunteers and reliant on donations, the "Dora" is your independent community library and is not part of the Vancouver Island Regional Library system.

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