



# News Release

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## Islands Trust Approves Budget for 2011-2012

VICTORIA -- On March 9th, the Islands Trust Council approved a new annual budget for 2011-12 of \$6.85 million which results in a 1% property tax increase over the previous year. Island property owners will pay 64 cents more per \$100,000 of assessed property value, or \$2.87 more on a property assessed at \$450,000. Islands Trust taxes account for approximately 10-20% of total property taxes, depending upon other jurisdictions listed on the tax bill.

The budget covers the costs of maintaining current levels of service, as well as increasing trustee remuneration next term. Trustees debated the funding challenges associated with the core work of the Islands Trust for several hours, balancing recent public input about the current economic situation with the ongoing requests the public makes for additional services and programs.

"We heard from an unprecedented number of constituents on both sides of the trustee remuneration topic, both in writing and informally in our communities," said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council. "Trustees and constituents agree it's important for trustees to come from many walks of life. Trust Council had a good debate about the trustee remuneration package, and in the end approved it at a reduced level. While this increase doesn't benefit the current trustees, we hope it will lead to more candidates in the elections this November," Malcolmson added.

The budget also responds to ongoing requests the Islands Trust receives from island communities to:

- improve the accessibility of public information, including improving the Islands Trust website and the accuracy and availability of Islands Trust digital mapping;
- proactively plan communities through review of Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws; and
- continue building relationships with First Nations groups that have interests in the Islands Trust Area.

The budget also supports several programs that are important to individual island communities such as:

- affordable housing, climate change mitigation, and conservation on Salt Spring Island with enhanced levels of community engagement;
- finalizing a farm plan for Denman Island;
- mapping sensitive ecosystems in the Northern Region;
- protecting fish habitat with Riparian Area Regulations;
- providing information and supporting community discussions about groundwater on Galiano and Saturna Islands; and
- expanding the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) program to Bowen Island (subject to approval of the Bowen Island Municipal Council and Metro Vancouver Regional District).

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of independent local governments that represents some 25,000 people living in the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment 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 BC mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

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

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