



# News Release

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## Islands Trust Committee Proposes Reduction in Budget Increase

VICTORIA — Following its February 16th meeting, the Islands Trust's Financial Planning Committee cut a proposed tax increase in half. The committee is proposing a 2.2% increase for the 2011-2012 budget, instead of the 4.4% previously circulated for public comment. The Islands Trust Council will receive the committee's recommendation and make a final budget decision on March 9th on Galiano Island. The proposed budget would mean a tax increase of just over \$6 on a property assessed at \$450,000.

"We really appreciate the thought and time people took to comment on our budget proposal," said Sheila Malcolmson, Chair of the Islands Trust Council and a member of the Financial Planning Committee. "After a careful review of the suggestions for cutting or maintaining programs, the committee is recommending that Trust Council adopt a reduced budget."

Much of the reduction is possible because of unanticipated savings in the current budget year that can be carried forward. "While some people believe there is a rush to spend at the end of a fiscal year, our staff carefully manage budget lines to enable savings wherever possible," said Malcolmson. "The committee has recommended that, rather than add these savings to our surplus, the majority be used to reduce taxes for next year."

Increases in trustee remuneration remain in the proposal and public opinion on this significant item was supportive. "We were gratified the amount of public support we heard for our work," said Malcolmson. "The new remuneration levels don't kick in until after the election this November and we hope they will encourage a greater diversity of trustee candidates."

Malcolmson noted that the public has more time to give input on the proposed budget. "Trustees will consider all comments received by March 4th before they vote on the budget on March 9<sup>th</sup>," she said.

Last year, the owner of a property assessed at \$450,000 paid about \$287.00 in Islands Trust taxes. They would pay approximately \$293.00 if Trust Council adopts the current budget proposal. Islands Trust taxes account for between 10-20% of the total property tax bill for property owners in the Islands Trust Area, depending on other property taxes charged on each island.

The proposed budget responds to comments and suggestions the Islands Trust has received from island communities about:

- The need to improve the accessibility of information for the public, including improving the Islands Trust website and the accuracy and availability of Islands Trust digital mapping;
- Proactive community planning through review of Official Community Plans and Land Use Bylaws; and
- Continuing to build relationships with first nations groups that have interests in the Islands Trust Area.

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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

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The proposed 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 on two islands in the Northern Region;
- Addressing riparian area protection on Hornby and Saturna Islands;
- 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.

Budget details (explaining the original 4.4% proposed increase) are available from the Islands Trust website at the following [link](#) or directly from the following Islands Trust offices:

1-500 Lower Ganges Road  
Salt Spring Island, BC  
Phone: 250.537.9144

700 North Road  
Gabriola Island, BC  
250.247.2063

200-1627 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC  
250.405.5151

Public comments should be sent by March 4, 2011 to: Islands Trust Council, Attention: Treasurer at #200-1627 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8R 1H8; by fax: 250.405.5155 or by e-mail to: [budget2011@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:budget2011@islandstrust.bc.ca).

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of independent local governments that represents some 25,000 people living within 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 British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

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## **CONTACT**

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