



Governance Committee Addendum

Date: Friday, February 10, 2023
Time: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Location: Electronic meeting, Public venue
Islands Trust
200-1627 Fort Street
Victoria, BC V8R 1H8

Pages

7. BUSINESS - WORK PROGRAM ITEMS

7.1 Analysis and Priority Setting of the February 2022 Governance Report - Briefing

7.1.1 *Appendix A. v. Trustee Stamford submission*

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Response to the Great Northern Islands Trust Governance Review Report

Kate-Louise Stamford

The Great Northern Islands Trust Governance Review Report grew out of a general malaise in the Trust Council as its 26 members grappled with a growing budget, evolving dissatisfaction of regional representative disparity, and an unclear vision. Trustees were buffeted with increasingly hostile constituent engagement as well as a frequent, but non-specific charge of inefficiency both from within the Trust Council and by external interests.

The decision to have an external review came at a particularly fraught time as Council was struggling with the significance and direction of the Policy Statement and the huge impact of the pandemic. Not only had the whole operation of the Trust turned 180 in a matter of weeks into an unprecedented virtual existence, the Council had not met in person in more than a year. The Review Committee was self-selected and unintentionally further fanned the flames of distrust about the whole project. The decision itself barely passed a majority vote demonstrating how fraught the Trust Council was.

It was no surprise then that the Great Northern Review, both in its process and in its recommendations, reflected a state of the Islands Trust that, to me over-emphasized a critical but temporary state of angst and under-emphasized the long-term strength of an organization looking for a path forward to modernization and clarity. The in-person presentation by the consultants in March of 2022 provided a much more positive and nuanced recognition of the unique position and opportunities the Islands Trust has in British Columbia.

Finally, by releasing the report to the public sans context and endorsement by the Trust Council, the Great Northern IT Governance Review has taken on a life of its own among various people and groups that distorts the complex situation at the Islands Trust.

Here are my views about the recommendations outlined in the report:

Recommendation #1 and 6: *Best candidates for elected positions (ie Chair, Exec Committee). Clear job descriptions and expectations available to candidates, nominees and elected Trustees* – This is an issue all regional governments face: The candidates are new and often unknown but ongoing government business cannot be conducted without election of officers. I do not see Trust -wide elections for Chair given the independent and isolated nature of Local Trust Areas and their election processes. Based on this recommendation, a genuine effort was made by the previous Executive Committee and staff to provide opportunities for candidate engagement after the last election.

Further Action:

- Policies for new Chair/Exec Comm candidate engagement process.
- Advocate for changes at the provincial level for gradual executive handover at the regional and Trust level.
- Regular Trustee engagement opportunities with the Executive Committee to foster more trust and understanding about the work that is done at that level.

Recommendation #2 to #5: *Comprehensive review of Committee Structure with a goal of increasing Committees with fewer members and clear directional processes* – A long-standing issue at Trust Council as Trustee's priorities continue to languish on project lists.

I understand the desire for this and hope that any new format is linked to the strategic plan and is staffed appropriately. Note that some Regional Districts are consolidating committees for efficiency's sake. Possibly the current standing committees with a more robust sub-committee format not reliant on staff.

Doable: Yes,
Priority: Medium
Cost: depends

Recommendation #7: *Appropriate training and workshop opportunities be made available to Trustees at the beginning of the term.* The previous Executive Committee took this recommendation to heart and provided a range of informational opportunities that made use of zoom and recorded options.

Action: outline clear guidance about what sorts of resources should be made available and provide for a review at a later time to ensure relevancy and effectiveness.

Doable: Yes
Priority: High
Cost: medium

Recommendation #8: *Creation of a Secretariat position to Trust Council.* I looked at various local governments and did not see this position anywhere. It was jurisdictionally vague (employee? Council position?) and seemed to be almost a Party Whip position which doesn't really fit our governance structure. The current Legislative Services staff position for the most part.

Action: provide direction to staff about the focus of the Legislative Services role.

Doable – do not understand the point
Priority – Low
Cost – potentially high with new staff

Recommendation #9: *First Nation representation on Trust Council*

Action: recommendation to the Province after Policy Statement is finalized
Doable- outside of jurisdiction
Priority: High
Cost: Could be high

Recommendation #10: *Provincially Appointed Trustees.* Although the Islands Trust mandate does state we preserve and protect on behalf of British Columbians in general, individuals who could potentially vote on issues that impact islanders but who are not part of that electoral area could be problematic.

Doable: Outside of jurisdiction
Priority: Low

Cost: medium

Recommendation #11: *adoption of a multi-year corporate plan.* I thought we were ostensibly doing a corporate plan when the Trust Council agrees to the electoral term strategic plan.

Action: Adjust the strategic plan to include financial and staffing components

Doable: Yes

Priority: Medium High

Cost: Not sure

Recommendation #12: *Replace the advocacy function with a communications and engagement function.* I would support appropriately defining communications, advocacy and engagement and properly fund the whole department. We have consistently underfunded this area, especially around communications and wonder why projects are not better supported by the public.

Action: provide communication/advocacy/engagement expectations for all projects

Doable: Yes (and, not or)

Priority: High

Cost: High

Recommendation #13: *Management Review to align staffing with Trust Council.* The Great Northern IT Governance Review did touch on aspects of management but not in a detailed way. I would like to see a management review come after a 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is developed and the Policy Statement is completed. This will provide for more efficient alignment.

Doable – Yes after other priorities are completed first

Priority – Medium

Cost: Medium/High

Recommendation #14: *Further integration of expertise and resources between the IT Conservancy and the Islands Trust.* Certainly, this has been a long-standing goal and staff and ITC Board members continue to consider ways to build awareness of how ITC can better inform the planning goals. I know communication and coordination between staff is good but not necessarily recognized. The current staffing levels limit the amount of time biological/ecological experts can devote to activities outside of the Conservancy but adjustments in staffing could make their services more flexible to supporting Islands Trust.

One out-of-the-box thought was flipping the structure on its head and aligning the Islands Trust as part of the Islands Trust Conservancy – thereby clearly stating biodiversity protection as the priority. Just putting it out there.

Realistic – medium

Priority – medium

Cost: High for staffing

Recommendation #15: Trustee Compensation. I think the last Trustee remuneration review was around 2010. To gain a variety of qualified representation and encourage elections, a remuneration review should be conducted this term

Doable: High
Priority: High
Cost: Medium

Planning review – While I agree with several of the recognized difficulties (ie OCP's – Gambier LTA one has 4 of them!) I don't think the timelines are realistic if First Nation engagement is really a priority for the Trust. I look forward to the final roleout of the Regional Planning Team and how it will better serve the ongoing needs of the islands. And outdated OCP's are not the pervue of the Islands Trust – everywhere I look I see old OCP's – we just have more of them.

There are several aspects of IT governance that were not considered in any detailed way that I think are important to review further:

Under representation of larger islands specifically Salt Spring. A governance review in 2008 (?) provided a series of recommendations in regard to Salt Spring which was ultimately rejected by the local islanders in favour of asking for an incorporation referendum. The question of possible under-representation of the larger “urban” islands verses the over-representation of marginally populated “rural” islands needs to be examined further. Either way, Salt Spring remains underserved by the Islands Trust and this has to be addressed.

An inefficient governance structure. My understanding of one of the primary purposes of the governance review was to examine inefficiencies. Trust Council should clearly acknowledge the structural inefficiency of a 26-member board that meets on a quarterly basis. No amount of governance reviewing is going to change this dynamic unless the Council is willing to consider a different model – regional representation perhaps or amalgamation of some island groups. I recognize it is beyond the current power of Trust Council to change the make up of the legislative body, but it may come to that anyway as First Nations and other representation is considered.

If Council is unwilling to consider a different size of governance structure then it must come to terms with a certain level of inefficiency as complex land decisions are managed over 450 islands across 1000's of hectares in a rapidly changing world.

I could meander on but I look forward to how this discussion can evolve into a series of actionable priorities that we can move ahead on.