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SALT SPRING ISLAND TAKES LEGAL ACTION ON UNLAWFUL SHORT TERM VACATION RENTAL

Coast Salish Territory, Salt Spring Island—The Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee (SSI LTC) has authorized legal action be taken against the owner of an unlawful short-term vacation rental (STVR) located on an Upper Ganges Road property. The SSI LTC is seeking a court order stopping the use of the property as a STVR, which is contrary to the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee Land Use Bylaw.

In response to the ongoing housing crisis on Salt Spring, the SSI LTC has taken a proactive approach on unlawful STVRs, which are potentially removing accommodation from the long-term housing market.

“Islands Trust has heard from the public about growing concerns over the impacts of STVRs on their lives and the community at large,” said Peter Luckham, Chair of the Salt Spring Island LTC. “In addition to the very real concerns that these unlawful STVRs are affecting the amount of long-term rental housing available for island residents, we’ve also heard about increased noise, problems with traffic and parking, and water issues from these operations. This is why the LTC has requested that bylaw officers take a proactive approach when dealing with STVRs.”

The house in question is a single family dwelling. The owner does not live on site, and the property has been managed by a third party individual who manages several STVRs. The use of a single family dwelling for the purpose of a short-term vacation rental is prohibited on Salt Spring. The island’s Land Use Bylaw only permits temporary tourist accommodation in single family dwellings in some zones, if it is provided as home-based bed and breakfast accommodation that is accessory to a residential use and operated by a person permanently residing on the property. The Land Use Bylaw was developed through extensive public engagement. The regulations covering bed and breakfast accommodations are designed to support a vision of tourism that is small-scale, low-impact, and encourages meaningful connections with the Salt Spring community.

The property has been the subject of numerous complaints dating back to 2017. Islands Trust Bylaw Compliance and Enforcement staff have notified the owner of the property, along with their agent, on multiple occasions. Despite repeated requests to the operator of the STVR to cease operations, the STVR continues to be active.

“We’ve had numerous complaints from the public regarding the property in question,” said David Marlor, Director, Local Planning Services. “There’s also evidence that the property is operating unlawfully as a vacation rental and is often occupied by vacationers. Bed and breakfasts and other lawful, home-based businesses are required to comply with the Salt Spring Island Land Use Bylaw, and it is a reasonable expectation that competing temporary tourist accommodations should also comply with those bylaws and other regulations.”

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The Islands Trust is a federation of local government bodies representing 26,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area and another 10,000 non-resident property-owners. 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, co-operation 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 islands and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

CONTACT: David Marlor, Director, Local Planning Services, 250.405.5169
Peter Luckham, Chair, Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee, 250.210.2553

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