



**Northern Office**

700 North Road, Gabriola Island, BC V0R 1X3

Telephone **250 247-2063** Fax 250 247-7514

Toll Free via Enquiry BC in Vancouver 660-2421. Elsewhere in BC **1.800.663.7867**

Email [northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:northinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca)

Web [www.islandstrust.bc.ca](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca)

October 7, 2019

Comox Valley Regional District Board  
600 Comox Road  
Courtenay, BC V9N 3P6

Dear Comox Valley Regional District Board,

I am writing on behalf of the Denman Island Local Trust Committee to ask that the CVRD carry out a feasibility study about the creation of a housing service for Denman Island. This request was formalized in a resolution passed by the Local Trust Committee on August 14, 2019, that “the Denman Island Local Trust Committee request the Comox Valley Regional District to carry out a feasibility study for a housing service on Denman Island.”

**Background**

The Denman Island Local Trust Committee (DILTC) is the governing agency responsible for land use planning on Denman. We are not authorized to build, operate, or fund housing, nor to provide a housing service of any kind. Our work in supporting housing diversity and security is focussed on ensuring our zoning regulations include appropriate options for a variety of housing, and dealing with housing rezoning applications.

The DILTC has been aware of the unmet need for secure, affordable housing for many years, both anecdotally and also through evidence reported in numerous studies, most recently the 2018 Denman Island Housing Needs Assessment, commissioned by the Islands Trust and completed by Dillon Consulting. Key findings from this report are cited below.

**Community support for a feasibility study**

There is widespread community concern about housing on the Island and demonstrated interest in the potential of a housing service.

- In the 2014 CVRD referendum which led to the creation of a housing service, 80% of Denman voters voted in favour.
- 10 representatives from four community organizations and the Islands Trust attended a meeting with Area A Director Arbour in August, 2019, to learn about and discuss a potential housing service. The meeting concluded with a decision by the majority of participants to support a request for feasibility study.

Preserving *island* communities, culture and environment

Bowen Denman Hornby Gabriola Gambier Lasqueti Mayne North Pender Salt Spring Saturna South Pender Thetis

- The Denman Island Residents' Association, The Hornby and Denman Health Care Society, and the Denman Housing Association have passed resolutions and provided letters of support for this request (attached).

### **Housing Needs on Denman Island**

Numerous housing studies carried out on Denman Island over the past 10 years all affirm a critical need for affordable, attainable, and seniors' housing across the housing spectrum from supported housing to rentals to affordable ownership.

The 2018 *Housing Needs Assessment for the Northern Region of Islands Trust* has 20 pages focussed on Denman Island. Here are its conclusions:

"It is clear that the no, low and even moderate income households have difficulty accessing the housing market. This represents the young adults, seniors and families. While they may be able to rent, there is little secure appropriate rental accommodation available.

"The 2016 Census demonstrates that 25.4% of the population, or 150 people, have no or low income. These people are considered vulnerable.

"The average income is \$25,000 below the regional average. The 2008 Housing Needs on Hornby and Denman Island (*Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation*, December 2008) identified a total housing need of 68 units for renters and seniors. Based on the population growth projected for 165 units and 48% need for affordable rental, Denman Island now requires up to 80 affordable housing units."

### **Housing Solutions—current and potential**

Denman Island currently has 1 unit of affordable rental housing (regulated as such through zoning and a housing agreement) and 15 units of ownership-style affordable coop housing (also regulated through zoning and a housing agreement).

Regulations were changed in 2015 to allow secondary suites and, with a temporary use permit, secondary cottages. There is little evidence to suggest that this has significantly improved housing options.

Two grassroots non-profit associations dedicated to providing affordable housing are currently active on Denman. The Denman Community Land Trust Association (DCLTA) holds one unit of affordable rental housing and is currently working through the regulatory process to create eight units of affordable seniors' housing. Denman Housing Association last year submitted a rezoning application to create 20 units of affordable and market-level rental housing. Both groups are run by volunteers and have considerable community support.

### **Potential for a housing service on Denman Island**

Denman Islanders in general are highly concerned about the impact of housing scarcity on individuals and the overall social fabric. The 2018 Islands Trust Housing Needs Assessment reported that 83% of survey respondents said they were aware of people living in illegal and inappropriate housing. Clearly, it

is time to look seriously at the possibility of a housing service, and to provide Denman Islanders with enough information to decide if this is a strategy they support.

Funding from a housing service could be funnelled directly to groups providing (or working towards providing) affordable housing, or to a social service organization that could run programs to support housing (tenant and landlord education, mediation, information-sharing, help accessing funding, advocacy, etc.), or used in some other way. A feasibility study could clarify and evaluate options. Please contact Trustee Laura Busheikin of Denman Island [lbushiekin@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:lbushiekin@islandstrust.bc.ca) with any questions about the information she compiled for this letter, and in relation to this project going forward.

Thank you for considering this request,

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Ellen Fast". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Chair Sue Ellen Fast  
On behalf of the Denman Island Local Trust Committee