



# News Release

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## **Islands Trustees Ask Visitors to Stay Home Islands have a higher percentage of seniors, and limited resources and supplies**

Lekwungen, METULIYE/Victoria, BC – Island trustees from across the Gulf and Howe Sound Islands are going public with a plea for people to stay away to minimize the spread of Covid-19 and to reduce pressure on limited island services. Trustees urge islanders to stay home and practice social distancing as recommended by Provincial Health Office Dr. Bonnie Henry.

“Now is not the time to be visiting the islands,” said Peter Luckham, Chair of Islands Trust Council. “Most Gulf Islands have a median age of over sixty years old and limited or no medical services. First responders are volunteers who are practicing sheltering in place in order to be available for normal emergencies. We urge everyone to stay home and avoid discretionary travel to and from the islands. As ferry-dependent communities, we are especially vulnerable and face additional challenges. Now is not the time to take a holiday or visit your vacation property.”

Many islands businesses, including restaurants, are understocked, understaffed, and closing down or significantly limiting their services. BC Ferries has reduced sailings to the Southern Gulf Islands while continuing to be an essential service for coastal communities. People visiting island properties from private boats are encouraged to return to their primary residences to reduce the need for medical evacuations.

“On behalf of all British Columbians, the Islands Trust works to preserve and protect over 450 islands in the Salish Sea,” continued Chair Luckham. “We now ask British Columbians to protect islanders and yourselves by staying home. We look forward to welcoming visitors again when it is safe to do so.”

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The Islands Trust Area is located within Coast Salish territory and is the homeland to over 28,000 Coast Salish Peoples who have called this place home since time immemorial. 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 5,200 square kilometres.

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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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## Backgrounder

The Province of BC coordinates agencies during a pandemic event. Regional Districts in the Trust Area have responsibility for coordinating emergency response on the islands. For local information:

[Capital Regional District \(https://www.crd.bc.ca/about/news/covid-19-information\)](https://www.crd.bc.ca/about/news/covid-19-information)

[Comox Valley Regional District \(https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/connect/public-notice/covid-19-coronavirus-update\)](https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/connect/public-notice/covid-19-coronavirus-update)

[Cowichan Valley Regional District \(https://www.cvrld.bc.ca/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2159\)](https://www.cvrld.bc.ca/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2159)

[Metro Vancouver](#)

[Sunshine Coast Regional District \(https://www.scrd.ca/covid-19-updates\)](https://www.scrd.ca/covid-19-updates)

[Regional District of Nanaimo \(https://www.rdn.bc.ca/pandemic\)](https://www.rdn.bc.ca/pandemic)

[Qathet Regional District \(https://www.qathet.ca/2020/03/18/qrd-response-to-covid-19/\)](https://www.qathet.ca/2020/03/18/qrd-response-to-covid-19/)

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