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February 6, 2020

File No.: 0230-20

Association of Vancouver Island
and Coastal Communities
525 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 0A8

Re: 2020 Resolution

Please be advised that on February 5, 2020, the Islands Trust Executive Committee passed the following resolution for the 2020 AVICC Annual General Meeting:

That the Executive Committee direct staff to forward a resolution with backgrounder for consideration at the 2020 Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities and Union of BC Municipalities conventions, requesting that the Province of British Columbia work with First Nations, and federal, provincial, and local government stakeholders, to develop a coordinated strategy to study and address the environmental and social impacts associated with liveaboards on the British Columbia coastline.

Please find attached the proposed resolution and backgrounder.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours truly,

Carmen Thiel
Corporate Secretary



2020 RESOLUTION SUBMISSION TO AVICC

COORDINATED STRATEGY TO ADDRESS LIVEBOARDS

ISLANDS TRUST

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS affordable housing pressures are leading to a growing population of liveaboards along the British Columbia coastline;

AND WHEREAS there are cumulative impacts on the marine environment and inadequate access to public services for liveaboard communities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Province of British Columbia work with First Nations, and federal, provincial, and local government stakeholders, to develop a coordinated strategy to study and address the environmental and social impacts associated with liveaboards on the British Columbia coastline.

BACKGROUNDER:

Growing pressures around the lack of affordable housing and displacement from urban centres have led to an increase in the population of “liveaboards” (persons using boats as their primary residence, typically anchored in a bay, harbour or marina) along the British Columbia coastline. In many places, current zoning regulations prohibit the use of boats or marine structures as dwellings on surface waters. Some liveaboards choose to live on the water as a lifestyle choice; others may come from vulnerable segments of society that have been marginalized due to socio-economic factors, including the lack of affordable housing. While many liveaboards are responsible, there are concerns that the illegal discharge of sewage, garbage and debris into the marine environment can result in significant environmental harm to the shoreline, coastal waters, shellfish populations, and First Nations archaeological sites. In addition, there are health and safety risks to liveaboards due to the derelict condition of abandoned boats or haphazard marine structures that are sometimes used as dwellings. Moreover, liveaboards often lack proper access to basic public services, such as water, sewage and garbage removal, and can be far from emergency medical and social support services. These issues are further complicated by questions surrounding multijurisdictional authorities over coastal waters.

Without affordable alternatives for housing, enforcement most often leads to displacement. While some local governments have been successful in working with the Province to establish License of Occupation zones with associated regulations (e.g. Bowen Island Municipality - Mannion Bay), this approach has often led to liveaboards simply moving their boats to other areas where the same challenges persist. Other local governments (e.g. Salt Spring Island’s Local Trust Committee - Ganges Harbour) have tried to avoid strict enforcement measures, in an attempt to not exacerbate the lack of affordable housing options. Liveaboards often live in fear of eviction and the issues around protection of the marine environment, health and safety and access to public services continue to grow. The development of a provincially-led strategy to study and address the environmental and social impacts associated with liveaboards would enable a multijurisdictional, synergistic approach to this province-wide problem, effectively balancing the needs for environmental protection with the needs for affordable housing in coastal communities.