

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com to read the current edition and more find more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics in our extensive archive of newspapers and articles.

Reprint from Volume 20 Number 17

September 4, 2008

Editorial: Islands Trust Stepping Up

On the Islands, we are at the end of an Islands Trust 3-year term (some nomination ads are in this edition and the election is scheduled for November 15.)

An active public interest in governance has arisen during the last 3 years; island-by-island and overarching watch-dog groups have formed. It has been a term of global shift and grass-roots change. Gone are the starry-eyed days when the Islands Trust had found its feet and people still believed that all trustees were 'good guys' in preserve and protect terms, or at least wouldn't say otherwise.

The Islands Trust is an uneasy structure of trusteeship through election. This might not matter too much with a stable long-term resident population, where people could remember years gone by. But with the Islands' massively increased and rapidly changing population may have little knowledge of the reality of important issues. Our Islands, and our way-of-life, touch and teach all who come here but too often people move on after about five years, taking that knowledge with them; we are constantly starting afresh.

Have you noticed how the relative values of your property tax assessment has switched between your buildings and your land in the last few years? This increasing value of land on the Islands has made us far too interesting to off-Island developers and property speculators. Sadly, the amount of money to be made from land development has also made it worthwhile to encourage candidates who may not have long-sighted trusteeship as their main objective.

For voters, the complexity of issues can be bewildering and the political aspects of an election—maneuverings, lobbying, misinformation, even whisper campaigns—may cause the election of people not interested in 'preserve and protect'—except perhaps for protection of vested interests.

Those who are not interested in politicking are sometimes reluctant to stand as candidates; who wants local squabbles for breakfast, lunch and dinner? And who wants to maintain a rather solitary aloofness from the chumminess of Islands' life? And, often, those who are interested in stewardship are looking for wider perspective, especially these days.

Recent events bring good news for them. Galiano Island trustees' August request that Trust Council look at two bylaws, previously turned down, has moved the Islands Trust up a level. No matter why it was requested; for the first time Trust Council was asked to oversee the affairs of an island. No matter who said what at that meeting; at last Council sees itself as more than a cozy discussion group. The federation for 'preserve and protect' was strengthened and trustees were allowed a wider perspective, compelling them to engage with the history and affairs of another island. From the comments of many trustees, it was clear that they already understood this broader role and were able to give it voice for the first time.

This should encourage those who value stewardship and the wider view to stand as candidates. Looking at mega-issues like climate change and how they relate to the Island Trust federation will be possible; as well as how this manifests on a particular island.

This broader perspective lets in some welcome fresh air. Islands' grass-roots, watch-dog groups are engaged, engaging, and ready to help. This is an exciting time when our area, the Salish Sea, with our 'preserve and protect' mandate' can be at the cutting edge of innovation and change. Innovation and change, excitingly, meshes with 'preserve and protect.' If ever there was a time for people with a will to serve 'preserve and protect,' in its broadest terms, to be nominated, it is now.

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

'This article was published (Sept 4, 2008) in 'Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 17,500 print copies in throughout the Gulf Islands and the Canadian Strait of Georgia from Tsawwassen to Campbell River, BC.'

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada. Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com. Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>