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Government stonewalls Galiano PMFL exemption

Letters from numerous Galiano Island residents to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands requesting that forest lands on Galiano Island be exempted from the provincial *Private Managed Forest Lands Act (PMFL Act)*, recently received a standardized reply from Assistant Deputy Minister Grant Parnell.

Residents' letters, among other things, noted that the terms of the *PMFL Act* conflicted with the legislated objectives and mandate of the Islands Trust, and with the authority of the Local Trust Committee to control, through the Community Plan and Land Use Bylaw, land use and development on the Island.

The government reply reiterated its belief that land use under the PMFL could be compatible with Galiano's OCP and bylaws. The *PMFL Act*, the deputy minister's letter said, 'is intended to ensure that managed forest owners are able to harvest and grow trees in a sustainable manner ... these provisions serve to balance the rights of a private land owner with the broader social, environmental, and economic public interest. The reference to a dwelling provides the opportunity for landowners to live on their managed forest, in the same way that farmers usually live on their land.'

While most PMFL-enrolled holdings are much larger parcels owned by forestry companies, mainly on Vancouver Island, a number of Galiano Forest lot owners have registered their properties under the *PMFL Act*. Generally, these lands were purchased from MacMillan Bloedel's tree farm on the Island nearly twenty years ago. Ever since that time, these properties have been at the heart of a community conflict complicated in recent years by the introduction of the *PMFL Act*.

Galiano is currently in the early stages of reviewing its Community Plan. The existing OCP predates the enactment of the *PMFL Act* (and thus takes precedence over it), but any change in the bylaws might result in the Galiano Trust Committee losing jurisdiction over any lands which have applied for and been included in the PMFL. ✍

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