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Editorial: One Size Does Not Fit All

Urban planners have long known that energy use, and thus GHG emissions, may be reduced by geographically concentrating development. For rural planning, this is not necessarily practical. And for Islands Trust planners, such concentration can directly conflict with the Trust mandate, and with existing OCPs.

The Islands Trust has taken on the Province's challenge to municipal government to come up with answers by May 31 (regional governments, with wider powers, have till 2011). In scrambling to comply with the provincial government's sweeping directive to reduce GHG emissions by 30%, Islands have been caught in a 'green' trap.

With Island Trust powers essentially limited to land-use planning, LTCs are taking actions to reduce emissions using tools which assume overall growth, development, and change. This assumption is in striking contrast with the tenets of the Islands Trust Policy Statement, which stems from the basic Trust Mandate to 'preserve and protect' the Islands' present nature. In fact, the islands of the Trust Area are defined as places where the way of life and environment, and thus planning priorities, are deliberately different from the surrounding, more urban, areas of the province.

The creation of 'compact, complete, and connected communities' through the physical development and increased density of villages, hamlets, or centres is not necessarily appropriate to every Island.

The basic strategy being considered in Islands Trust bylaws for reduction of GHG emissions is concentration of development—as if it were an urban area. But it's different on the Gulf Islands.

The Gulf Islands are essentially free of industrial emissions, and have a scattered development pattern, so reducing by percentages is hard. (Per capita, Gulf Islands GHG emissions are already substantially lower than provincial or Canada-wide per capita emissions).

However, reducing transportation emissions has significant potential for GHG reduction. Innovative transportation networks and many other solutions have been proposed and some implemented including: trails, bike paths, car stops, electric vehicle facilities, growing food locally, shopping at home, reducing burning; but the Islands Trust is likely not the local government vehicle to facilitate them—regional districts are.

Some Island Trust islands have managed to use generalized and motherhood language to comply with Bill 27, leaving them free to carry on reducing GHG emissions in truly effective, if not formulaic, ways. But others have responded with new OCP provisions which may have unintended development consequences.

The haste with which LTCs have had to make OCP changes may have discourage Islanders from looking at these amendments too closely. This would be a serious mistake. Changes in the objectives and patterns of land-use planning have the potential to change, and damage, the character of the Islands. (See also 'Island growth patterns could change to comply with Bill 27 clause,' page 1.)

It's time to find out about your Island's bylaw and continue working with your regional district to bring in very effective changes. ☞

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