A Watered Down Version of this letter was published in the Gulf Islands Driftwood
http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/saltspringislanddriftwood/opinion/
132593153.html
October 26, 2011 as a Viewpoint article – the following is the original submitted letter.

Does the End Justify the Means?
by John Macphereson

In defense of their actions, our Trustees and CRD Director have said if anyone was
concerned about conflict of interest and had contacted them directly, they would have
"looked carefully into the issue and sought advice".

As it happens, I did make contact. Last November I emailed CRD Director Hendren with
concerns about conflict of interest. I was concerned that the Climate Action Council
(CAC) was private while claiming to represent the broader community, and that several
members were declared supporters of the Trustees, some wearing new hats as Chairs of
new and small organizations. I was disturbed that both our Trustees, a quorum of the
Local Trust Committee, were engaged as leaders of this private organization to craft
policy which they would use to lobby themselves, as Trustees, for legislative action. The
CAC bylaws' purposes say "To advocate for appropriate government legislation,
regulations and policies," something their Driftwood piece didn't tell us.

Mr. Hendren replied and I quote: "Because of the manner that this entity has been
created there certainly will be problems of transparency and authority. How the Trust
folk will deal with this will be up to them. The membership issues are also a concern
because of conflict on interests, but there is a limited pool of talent to draw upon… The
only solution to that is to not establish entities like this. However there is an appetite in
our community to do something about these issues."

Limited pool? Appetite? In effect Mr. Hendren rationalizes issues of transparency and
conflict of interest with an "end justifies the means" argument. To his credit, he didn't
deny awareness of the issues. He said Trustees would deal with it in their own way. Is it
possible Mr. Hendren didn't discuss matters with Trustees, his savvy CAC co-founders?
I suggest all three choose to ignore the issues I'd raised because appetites and talent were
available.

The issue extends to non-elected officials. Trust Chief Linda Adams says in the Times-
Colonist she sees nothing wrong either because the CAC and the Water Council (WC) are
"community" organizations. But a community organization has open membership and
elected directors. Not so with the CAC and WC. Restricted membership. No public
meetings. No minutes of meetings released for public view. The actual "community"
has been kept in the dark.

Last week Jan Slakov deflected by suggesting we should focus on larger conflicts of
interest, not this. What I hear is that small scale community conflict of interest is OK. I

do not feel this is helpful in restoring trust, which is in such a sorry state that virtually every candidate now promises transparency and accountability.

I am concerned that elected officials have been and still are misleading us, along with the Trust's chief of staff and political supporters. Sadly, it has become the public's job to police officials about Trust policy on quorums, Community Charter provisions on conflict and Ministry provisions on ethical conduct. Elected officials add insult to injury saying they would have acted had they known - when the facts speak otherwise. And to top it all off, they lament that this had to happen "right as the fall election began". They should know the law gives petitioners no flexibility on timing.

For me the end does not justify the means. No matter how worthy their goal is, elected officials have no right to give our money to private entities while concealing their interests as founders, directors and Chairpersons. Nor can Trustees meet privately to help craft policy to be used to lobby themselves. It's not just illegal. It's wrong. And they know better. "Business as usual" must change and if it takes legal force, so be it. For more info see www.islandstrust.org