

Gulf Islands Citizens' Council Delivers Petition to Government - Submitted by Larry Pierce.

On May 5, 2011, 40 members of the Gulf Islands Citizens' Council met with Minister Ida Chong, and her staff, in Victoria. The purpose of the meeting was to present the Minister with our Petition, calling for a review of the Islands Trust Act. The Petition contains over 1300 signatures, about 10 % of the full time residents of the Trust Area.

We also sent a request to Linda Adams of the Trust, asking them to support our request.

Minister Chong was very receptive. The meeting was also attended by Joan McIntyre, MLA, and a representative of Don McRae, the Minister of Agriculture, and MLA for Hornby Island. I had previously met with Minister McRae, and he is well aware of the problems in the Trust Area.

The Gulf Islands Citizens' Council is made up of people from every island in the Trust Area. Hornby shares the same problems as the other islands. We are all interested in preserving our environment. There are no developers among us.

We are also interested in seeing some balance returned to Trust Council. Our communities are dying because of the Islands Trust. Balance between protecting the environment and our communities has been lost.

At the meeting, Mike Best from Salt Spring went through, in detail how the Island was dying. In addition to the LTC chasing the largest employer, Salt Spring Coffee, off of the Island, several businesses have now failed, or have closed and left the Island. A gas station, department store and pub have all left Ganges. Fulford Village has lost, or is losing a hotel, marina and market. Tourism is down 17% in the last five years. People are leaving.

Tourism is being killed by the deliberate harassment of small property owners who rent short term to tourists. Bylaws have been passed that catch many more owners who could be bringing tourists to Salt Spring.

A former Trustee from Saturna Island, John Money, spoke to the Minister. He spent 18 years as an Islands Trust Trustee, and 6 years on the Executive Committee. He recently resigned. His message was clear: the Trust Council has no comprehension of what makes a healthy community. They are killing communities.

We are all victims of a top down process, coming from the Trust Council. We do not elect them, just like we do not elect Louise Bell, yet they are making vital decisions for us.

If you are concerned about the approach taken on Hornby by the Islands Trust, you should write to Ida Chong, Minister for Communities, and ask her to help us.

Her address is Room 323 Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC. V8V 1X4.
ida.chong.mla@leg.bc.ca

Or write to Hornby Island's MLA, Don McRae, Minister of Agriculture, 437 5th Street Courtenay, BC V9N 1J7. don.mcrae.mla@leg.bc.ca