



VIA EMAIL

Ref. 63779

January 8, 2024

Timothy Peterson, Chair
Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee
Islands Trust
1-500 Lower Ganges Road
Salt Spring Island BC V8K 2N8
Email: rpingle@islandstrust.bc.ca; ssiinfo@islandstrust.bc.ca

Dear Timothy Peterson:

Thank you for your November 21, 2023, letter regarding the Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee's (SS LTC) resolution requesting to be included within the *Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023* (Bill 44) as if it were a municipality. My sincere apologies for the delay in response.

I appreciate learning that the SS LTC is interested in being included under the requirements of Bill 44 to help address the housing crisis on Salt Spring Island. The Province acknowledges that Salt Spring Island, like other Gulf Islands, faces unique housing challenges, including a lack of workforce housing and rental accommodation. I recognize that the SS LTC has proposed and advanced many actions over the past few years through the Housing Action Program to address Salt Spring Island's housing challenges, and I commend the SS LTC for all their work in this area.

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As you know, the Province recently passed Bill 44 in the fall of 2023. The *Islands Trust Act* has since been amended to exempt the Islands Trust from all small-scale multi-unit housing requirements (SSMUH), including those for secondary suites and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The decision was made to exempt the Islands Trust from SSMUH requirements because of the Trust's special mandate to "preserve and protect the Trust area and its unique amenities and environment" and pre-existing limitations to critical resources like drinking water and waste disposal. If the SS LTC believes it is in the best interest of their community to enable SSMUH, the SS LTC can update its zoning bylaw accordingly and follow the Province's policy manual. It is my understanding that the SS LTC is already exploring potential amendments to their zoning bylaw to allow for ADUs in certain areas through the proposed Bylaw 530.

The Ministry of Housing has focused on ensuring that the Islands Trust has the information they need to inform their decisions around development without requiring that additional densities be allowed, which could negatively affect sensitive Island ecosystems. This is why the legislation requires the Islands Trust, in addition to all municipalities and regional districts, to update their Housing Needs Report using a robust, standard method to calculate the total number of homes needed over 20 years. The information from the Housing Needs Report will give the Islands Trust important information about where and what type of housing they should be prioritizing in their community. The Islands Trust is, however, exempt from the requirement to update official community plans and zoning bylaws by December 31, 2025.

Applying SSMUH requirements specifically to the SS LTC Area would require additional consultation and policy work to better understand how to balance Salt Spring Island's need for additional housing with the Trust's "preserve and protect" mandate, the Island's existing infrastructure capacity issues, and the interests of local First Nations and other affected parties.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ravi Kahlon', written in a cursive style.

Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing

pc: The Honourable David Eby, KC
Adam Olsen, MLA