

Meeting background and purpose:

This was a community-initiated and community-organized open public meeting. It was not part of any formal Local Trust Committee or Islands Trust process. The purpose of the meeting was to hold an in-person gathering to hear and record further community perspectives on the Islands Trust Draft 2050 Vision document. Approximately 55 people attended.

Format:

All individuals who wished to speak were added to a speakers' list. Each speaker had two minutes to speak. Once all had spoken, the speaking order returned to the top of the list, so past speakers had an opportunity to raise further points and new speakers were added as they arose. The rotation continued until no names remained on the speakers' list.

Ground rules:

State your opinions. Share your concerns. Be polite to one another. Do not talk over one another.

Record of discussion:

- If rules are going to be put into our community plan, we should consider a system where community members can apply for exemptions in certain cases -- such as for private docks or the removal of trees on private land. The applications could then be reviewed by a local committee.
- I spoke with the Islands Trust representatives when they came to Provisions. The Trust representatives were from Calgary. They raised the topic of wood stoves being banned in many areas including the islands. They are hoping to not have people cut trees more than 6" in diameter. From a firewood point of view, that means cutting seven or eight times as many trees. From a sustainable forestry perspective – there would be no regeneration because you are cutting all the juvenile trees. "Unreasonable" is a polite way of putting it.
- The Trust is looking for an open warrant to enter people's property. That speaks to their intent in the future. Obviously they intend to enter our properties without cause because otherwise they wouldn't need a warrant.
- The Official Community Plan process is a problem; they just ignored our opinions.

- This sort of stuff doesn't come from people who live on the island. The tree bylaw idea came from the Raincoast Conservation Society. We're going to see more of this activity because anyone can approach the Islands Trust with recommendations. They don't need to live here, they don't even have to live in the country. We need to come up with a way to push back. People who live here don't have time – we're all too busy trying to make a living and keep our houses warm. Coming up with things like that makes those off-island people feel better about the life they are living, but they don't feel the consequences.
- I value the Islands Trust. Its mandate "to preserve and protect" is important to me. I appreciate what the trustees do. I trust them and I trust their judgment. They are trying to do the best for us, and they are very involved.
- People got worked up about things that they didn't need to get so worked up about. These things are just not the threat that people think they are. Rumours get spread around and then things blow up. For example, the tree bylaw: each island can decide if they want to have a bylaw that requires a permit to cut trees – the islands can decide what's right for them. It's not a threat to us.
- A lot of what we're talking about is about the impact on people. We are lucky to be part of the incredibly small number of people privileged to live on this rock. It's been here longer than us, and I hope it stays here long after we're gone. Whether it's nice for me or not nice for me doesn't really matter. We talk about property rights and yes, property does have rights – the trees have rights, the moss, the salamanders. Those rights should be our guiding principle. It's not just about what we want.
- Everybody here wants to influence how this *Vision 2050* document goes. How does this small group of people have some influence?
- The document is deliberately written to be ambiguous. There is no glossary, and all these terms are subject to interpretation: terms like "unique," "natural ecosystem," "semi-natural ecosystem." I sent an email to the regional planning manager asking for definitions and the reply was *'for a lot of the questions, words or phrases that don't have specific definitions means that the word can be interpreted by the reader or LTC'* – so this means that a lot of the wording is going to be up for interpretation.
- I fell in love with this community, with the island. I think what is important to 'preserve and protect' is the unique character of Lasqueti, not all the other islands. What I see here is a bunch of different groups, people with all different views. But one thing we share is that we don't like to be regulated. From artists who want the freedom to create, to farmers, builders, all the people who live and work here. There has to be some regulation to maintain peace; but it should be minimal. The community can come together without being policed. There is a slow creeping encroachment on the freedoms

we take for granted. The more we let ourselves be regulated, the more we risk losing the special character of the island.

- I want to remind everyone about the Islands Trust mandate. The Islands Trust can't ram anything down our throats. So we may have to institute a cutting bylaw – but it will be one that we all can live with. The 10-acre minimum was not created by the Islands Trust but by the Province and the Regional District. And I'm happy to have a low-density population. Our OCP process was so good other islands are copying it. Maybe the Islands Trust is not doing a great job – but then it is up to us to make them do a better job. We can work together to make the Trust do what we want it to.
- Is the tree-cutting bylaw going to happen, or is it still up for discussion? Is it in the works and something we can work against, or is it still just an idea that we can discuss? If it is really in the works, what concerns me is how expensive could it get? If there is a tree that's going to come down across my road, do I have to wait for that tree to fall? How much am I expected to pay to have someone come out and assess the tree to confirm that I can cut it? Bylaws can be implemented in ways that affect the people who can least afford it.
- My understanding of the tree-cutting bylaw is that if it goes through, it would be an “enabling” bylaw. That means that if our Local Trust Committee wanted to have a tree-cutting bylaw, then we would be able to enact that bylaw. But it is not something that the Islands Trust could enact and impose on us. The bylaw would be enabling, not imposing.
- We live in one of the largest complete Douglas Fir/ Arbutus forests left on the planet. Almost every tree on my property is dying of root rot. Root rot is endemic on the island – saying that we can't cut trees when they are already dying is ridiculous.
- On Saltspring Island, people are just buying up lots and then clearcutting them. The Islands Trust needs bylaws for places like that. Here, I would support something that we decide for ourselves.
- The tree-cutting bylaw business is a funny thing. The Islands Trust hasn't done its homework. There is lots of provincial legislation that spells out what Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) can and can't do. It would take an RPF to write such a bylaw, and there are lots of ethical issues involved for an RPF. Anything like a bylaw sets up the Islands Trust to keep asking for the same thing for the next 20 years. The real issue is that the Trust wants power that they are never going to get. They are not qualified to write a tree-cutting bylaw. There are ethics behind it all, and political ramifications behind what RPFs do.

- There have been lots of questions and inquiries as to where this idea of a tree-cutting bylaw all began. I have been looking into this and I see that it was at a meeting between the Islands Trust and Raincoast where the tree-cutting discussion started. It's out of touch with our community. Our community should have rights. There is something not working here. The Trust is asking for extra power; they are decentralizing, they want to take power from the province. We should be taking power from them. We should be governing our island. One option is a broad system of laws across all the islands; the other option is that each island gets to determine its own system.
- The tree-cutting thing is a red herring. It's not going to be the evil that we feared. But it is indicative of bureaucracy run amok. The Trust seems to continually want to grab more power. Likely other islands feel the same way. I was shocked to learn that there is no mechanism to review our membership in the Trust. As elections come up, we should start asking candidates if they support creating a mechanism so that if communities are really unsatisfied with the Trust, there's a way to deal with it. Right now we don't know that overall level of satisfaction, we don't have a way of measuring it.
- The real question is, what is our avenue to affect what the Trust is doing? How do we influence the 2050 Vision process? It is important to read the policy statement, because that is what they are going to vote on. If you have a concern, you need to be able to reference the policy statement. The policy statement is written with three types of policies: 1) Commitments of the Trust Council – these are overall guidance statements; 2) Directive policies; and 3) Coordination policies. If you want to affect the document, write to the Trust and talk about the specific changes you want to see in those policy statements.
- Lasqueti is a member of the Islands Trust because that is in the *Islands Trust Act* that was passed by the BC government. For Lasqueti to come out, there would need to be a change in the legislation, voted on by all MLAs. Lasqueti does not have the power to take itself out of the Trust, and the Islands Trust does not have the power to remove Lasqueti from the Trust.
- The Trust is made up of about 17 corporate bodies: the 13 islands, the Trust Council, the Executive Committee, the Conservancy. The Lasqueti Local Trust Council is responsible for the Lasqueti Official Community Plan and so on. The LTC is made up of our two local Trustees plus one Islands Trust Council representative. Everything we do has to be done by those three people. If you don't like what your LTC is doing, that is who to talk to.
- Raincoast came to the Islands Trust and said 'you are supposed to protect the islands. Nothing stops property owners from clearcutting.' The Trust then went to BC and said 'we should have the same control that municipalities have.' BC said no, but the conversation is continuing and it's not yet clear where it will go. But that doesn't mean we will have a treecutting bylaw. We would just need to "address" the issue – which

could mean we have a statement that says “we want no treecutting bylaw” or “we will have this kind of bylaw that works for us.”

- I lived for many years in a municipality that had a bylaw to prevent people from cutting the last remaining large old trees. The bylaw was stringent as stated but ineffective in practice because you can always assess a tree to be at risk of something, and those bylaws always have caveats for danger trees.
- I am in favour of the Islands Trust. It was a visionary piece of legislation to say there is a distinct environment and distinct communities on the islands, and we need a governance system that recognizes that. We should never be lumped in with the mainland or Vancouver Island communities. The Trust doesn't always live up to its promise but it is better than nothing. We should focus on how to improve the system rather than chuck it.
- My main concern with the 2050 Vision document is the intent. There are all these ambiguous statements -- so what is intended? And how will they interpret it? I personally don't have a big problem with the Trust but I don't like their way of dealing with Lasqueti, because Lasqueti is different. My main concern is the intent behind Vision 2050 -- it looks like they are intending to push their agenda forward to 2050 and beyond. What is their intent? The proposed tree bylaw is just one point that is obviously out of place for our community. The OCP is another problem: we went to great effort to offer our input, and the first thing they did was try to change the definition of a key issue even though they had been told not to touch it.
- The Islands Trust mandate is not just to 'preserve and protect' – the full mandate is to “preserve and protect the islands for the benefit of the people of the islands and the province.” Keeping this community the way it is, is what preserves and protects Lasqueti. A couple rules have already been thrust upon us: for example, fish farms and casinos are a no-go throughout the region. We would have come to that decision ourselves, but it's the process that is the problem; that slippery slope. They make a few decisions for us, and then it becomes more decisions.
- I recently hiked up into a clearcut on Little Mountain. That's forest land, and anything over 60 acres can be logged. Then I looked over Parksville, which has a tree-cutting permit system, and there are no native trees left. Then I looked over at Lasqueti, which has no permitting system and no clearcuts. So right now it isn't a problem - but it will be if we get a permitting system.
- We are incredibly well represented as a democracy. We have three elected representatives for 400 people. We see them regularly, we share food, we ride together on the ferry. We're privileged to live in an active democracy. I looked at the 2050 draft and saw that there are very small changes, mostly to do with reconciliation. There is

some text seeking enabling legislation about tree-cutting. I kept reading, looking for the big shoe to drop, but couldn't see one. If you compare the new draft to the existing version, there is no huge change. I don't see it as a big threat.

- I am concerned about the Trust saying “*as there is no definition in the document it's up to the reader or LTC to interpret.*” One targeted thing we could do is ask for a glossary so it's not subject to interpretation. According to the Trust Council, directives in the document can be and have been imposed on our LTC. These directives say “shall” and “Will” and “must” – the LTC can be forced to follow these.
- Glossaries are important. Not so much so that we get our preferred definition, but so we all understand what is meant. And we need our community to stay engaged with our local government. If we want our local government to be in touch with the community, then people need to stay engaged. A handful of people go to the Trust meetings. We need people to sit on the APC (this sits between the Local Trust Committee and the community) to have our voices heard. We need to follow along. For example this policy statement has been in development for three or four years now. We need to still engage even when it's not exciting, and vote or even run for election. There are over 50 people here today, which is pretty good for a community meeting.
- We are talking a lot about tree cutting bylaws. But are people really clearcutting here? It's a non-issue. Rentals, housing – *that* is a huge issue. None of those people are here to talk about it because they are too busy trying to make the rent. I want to speak on behalf of those not here. When you say people have to get involved, you have to recognize that not everyone can take time off work, or hire a babysitter. I wasn't going to talk today but the fact that it's been all about the trees makes me need to say something about the people who are trying to make it here.
- How is the Trust 2050 plan going to increase and encourage affordable housing? There's a pamphlet here. The Trust has recognized it's important. But what can be done?
- That comment resonated with me. That's about me, my generation: I worked this morning, and took time off to be here. A lot of people love it here and want this community to continue. You have to make space for the next generation to be here. It's not the same as it used to be.
- What I hear about mostly is concerns related to our community, and how we fit in with the system. Some are ok with the system and some are upset; it's not smooth going, that's why we're here. “We need to engage” – we have heard that a lot over the years. What we're lacking is a system that advocates for our community, that brings us together. We're getting outside pressures that don't fit, and it feels like our community is at stake. It would be easier if there was a part of the system where the priority is our community. “To preserve and protect” our own community should come first.

- The risk for our community is that we'll age out. We need to find a way for young people to live here. There is a bias against rural communities; governments don't like them because they are too expensive. They want us condensed into cities. We need to look at affordable housing. That could be micro-housing, or there could be other options but it can't work on a 10 acre minimum. I hate to say that, but it's true.
- We are really lucky: we are a small population with three elected representatives. We get to decide what we want. Each of us individually has more influence than we would have in a bigger area. We are influencing what the Trust comes up with. The OCP was a good process. There was a lot from the LCA, and from committees focusing on different aspects of what we wanted. It was inclusive, with lots of young people dealing with policy. We are the ones who decide – we get to do that here.
- On Lasqueti we have good land, amazing gardeners, and a long growing season, but also long droughts. I would love to buy all our produce here but local growing can't keep up with island demand. I am concerned about limits on water for personal use that also limit our ability to grow food. In a dry season, we might need to irrigate for months straight. We should be producing our own food, or where does our self-reliance and food security go? During the pandemic, on Vancouver Island there were limits on egg purchases. We should be able to supply our whole island with eggs. It's crazy to think that the Trust could limit our water use. They shouldn't place a limit on us taking care of ourselves.
- As bureaucracies get more proficient at steering the Islands Trust, if we realize we're not happy with where they are steering us, then where is the off ramp? How do we get the genie back in the bottle? The Trust bureaucracy is moving towards more control, they are honing their skills at controlling us. That's what concerns me.
- We need a government that serves us. We decide what Lasqueti needs and wants, rather than live in fear of a government that encroaches on our lives and come to meetings because we're worried. I didn't come here to live like that. I don't want a government I'm fearful of. The Trust is on a course to become too complex, too over-governed. It isn't serving us. I don't know how to fix it but I don't like it.
- We are very different from just about everywhere else in BC except maybe some places in the Kootenays. There is no enforcement; enforcement authorities rarely come out. No building regulations means there are dynamic and innovative houses here. No hydro means we make our own, we are creative. Doctorow's books say the capitalist system is going to screw you, so make your own rules, work your own life, gather the people together with you, and work things the way they need to be. On Lasqueti we are already doing this.

- This is another great turnout, with lots of good talk. People are concerned, and here we are. This is an important thing we do on this island. We have a long history of coming out and talking things over and working things out. Thank you to the organizers and I'm grateful that we have this hall to come together in.
- The Islands Trust is a creature of the BC government. The Trust was told years ago that they needed to have an overall statement to say 'this is what we see as umbrella policies that we feel are important for the whole area.' What we have here is the third or fourth iteration of renewing this overall vision document. We have a governance structure that says we get to elect two local trustees; then we need a chair from another island and that makes up our Local Trust Committee. That's set out in legislation. When that legislation first came in, it was two local trustees and three Trust executive – but that didn't go over well and there was a lot of advocacy to change the legislation to have two local trustees and just one Islands Trust representative, so we can't have stuff pushed down on us from the Trust office in Victoria.
- There are currently three vacant positions on the Advisory Planning Committee, if people want to get involved.
- The Trust's draft policy statement recognizes "the gap between those who can and can't afford a home is growing." That's a high-level observation, not a policy. There is also a proposed directive to the LTC: "strive to address housing needs by identifying areas appropriate for more housing." This brings it back to us: everyone recognizes that it's a big issue, and is putting it back to us. That's how it should be. We have to take responsibility for this. We can't expect anyone else to solve it for us. Maybe we need a new body or new committee looking at local governance issues – are there the volunteers willing to do this? We have to find our own solutions and then advocate for them.
- For sustainability, there is a great need for the community to source food on the island. Take eggs, for example: this winter we've had too many – we've been literally giving them away. Surely others will have a surplus of other items as we get into the growing season. If we were to put together lists of folks who have excess, that might help address some of the sustainability problem and move ahead to a better way than going over to Vancouver Island to get eggs or other products.
- Why have the Trust decided not to include a glossary in this document? There are directives that the LTC has to follow, with hundreds of words that are subject to interpretation. I think it's so they interpret these directives as they wish. Lasqueti is referenced as an island they can use as an example of what the Trust can do – for example, with development permit areas. When the LTC sabotaged that initiative, the LTC was not treated well by the Trust planner. There was some subtle passive-

aggressive bureaucratic backlash. When they can interpret things as they wish: that is the danger here.

- The whole point of the local representatives is that they represent us. The reason the language and directives aren't specific is so that we have more leeway. They want us to decide for ourselves. The whole idea of the Trust is that every island gets to decide what is right for them. We are the last holdout; being in the Trust can stop us from losing everything to multimillionaires. That can preserve a way of life. What we need to do is get young people here. We want people to come, so we need reach out into community and find solutions and get things done. We need to love each other more, support each other more, and be inclusive.
- I'd like to see the Trust keep going but I can see the tension. Government is government. They are trying to make things better but their idea of better may not be ours. The difficulty is that everyone is busy. It feels like you have to have a PhD in local governance to get involved, it's intimidating. I'm impressed by the work done by Lasquetians but I'm also trepidatious to step up. I don't have the time but if I don't step up then I'm a free-rider, and I'll know that I didn't do what I could. We all have to step up. So how can we engage people in an affordable way (affordable in terms of time and effort and so on) to leverage all the genius and goodwill of the people of Lasqueti without overwhelming us?
- In the old days when my parents were here, there were different issues that affected the community. The community was shrinking, and there was no access. So they formed a group called something like the Local Improvement Society. They wrote letters to ministers and advocated for what the community needed. They didn't have as much local government at the time. The LCA is not filling that advocacy role. We need something like that.
- We're talking about sustainability, housing, the future – does anybody have a number for our ultimate population goal? How many people can live here sustainably – that is, sustainable for the environment and socially?
- The problems the Trust is trying to solve show up as the main subject headings in the draft Vision document: Reconciliation, forest stewardship, housing... those are things I want my local government to be thinking of. This is what all governments should be thinking of. The feedback that we should give is not that they shouldn't be thinking about those things; it's what are the policies, and then what are the processes to ensure those policies reflect how we want to live our lives. The question is how we choose to deal with those issues. It's not "we don't care about climate," but "how do we deal with climate on Lasqueti?" It's not that we think these are the wrong issues – it's the process for how we deal with them. The issues are absolutely what we should be concerned with.

- I love you people. You are a diverse weird group but we manage to see eye to eye on things. We share a healthy dose of anti-establishment thinking, a healthy skepticism of government. We're never going to get to a sense of comfort that the government is working for us. And that's a good thing: a healthy democracy means being vigilant. We need more local decisions. We have to focus on specific issues, not vague generalizations or threats. We can take back some of that power. We can just go do stuff, then fight them on it.
- One example of this is our recently implemented emergency number. It took a lot of work but eight years later we have the system we envisioned. We need to take the power and do the things we want to do.
- One issue we have not touched on is the dock. Any changes around that will take a long time – we are having a hard time already finding funding to repair dock. Busy weekends raise safety issues, with people not familiar with the rules. We are starting a process to look for funding to expand the dock (both the marine dock and the parking area). This will take a while and it would be good to have more people involved.
- If we want to propose changes to the Vision document, it is best to make specific discrete points and reference the exact changes: "Part X, Section Y" and so on.
- Could Lasqueti write up our own glossary? This would set out what Lasqueti believes these terms mean, and then we could present this to the Trust. That way we take control, we decide.
- A defined glossary is actually a problem. If it is rigidly defined, there is no flexibility and this can lead to big problems. For example, there might be a property that could be eligible for low-cost housing and community likes the plan but the definition of the zoning is too rigid. The terms that you have to worry about are already defined through the courts and in legislation. I worry if we define things too specifically, that creates rigidity in the OCP. If we chisel things in stone, that's the crap that kills communities.
- What do we want to have come out of this meeting? We need to find a time that works for young people. Maybe evenings are a better time for people who are working during the day. It's up to all of us to decide what to do next.