

Response to Positively Forward Election Questions
by
Eric G March, Candidate for Salt Spring Island Trustee

Questions on Trust-wide issues:

1. The Islands Trust mandate states that “The object of the Trust is to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally.”

What do the words “environment” and “unique amenities” mean to you?

Eric’s Answer:

Environment: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines the environment as referring to “the surrounding conditions in which living organisms exist, encompassing both natural and human-made elements. It includes components such as air, water, soil, and biodiversity, which are essential for sustaining life.” This aligns closely with the definition I used in my many years as an outdoor educator and wilderness skills trainer. We cannot separate the natural and human environments from each other as we are interconnected and influence each other. Let’s be honest with ourselves, in the anthropocene age there are no truly natural environments left, so we must work to preserve balance between the human and natural environments.

Unique Amenities: The unique amenities of Salt Spring Island include any of the many of the things that make our island special. Our Garry Oak Ecosystems, our Mediterranean Climate type, our indigenous history, our olive grove, the terroir that makes our wine and cider great, the best Fall Fair around...

2. Do you support passing the 2026 draft Trust Policy Statement as it is? Why, or why not?

Eric’s Answer:

The 2026 draft TPS is a huge improvement on the current TPS, but it is only a draft. While not perfect, I don’t think it requires massive revision. I expect the 2027 revision of the 2026 draft will be worth passing. I look forward to being presented with it, should I be elected.

3. Given the legal authority of the Islands Trust Act, what are your thoughts about the role of elected Trustees?

Eric’s Answer:

Simply put, an elected Trustee’s role is to use land use planning to preserve and protect the Trust Area. Less simply, the role of a Trustee is to act as a local government official representing not only their human constituents but the natural world as well. Finding this

balance is part of what makes the Trust great and ensuring the need to protect our natural world while also ensuring that those who live in our communities can thrive is an essential part of being a Trustee.

4. How do you feel about the various criticisms that have been leveled against the Islands Trust?

Eric's Answer:

The Islands Trust largely deserves many of the criticisms it receives. It is hard to answer this question without knowing which specific criticism you'd like me to address. Some of the criticisms I personally make are that the Trust on Salt Spring seems to have no problems with mass land clearance for subdivision for single family homes, but workforce housing requires significant processing. The Trust also seems captured by a small vocal minority and finds engagement outside of business hours difficult.

Questions on Salt Spring issues:

5. Specifically, what policies would you propose to better protect the natural environment on Salt Spring?

Eric's Answer:

A question I frequently ask is why can a retiree from Toronto, or New York, or LA, move to Salt Spring, buy a piece of land, clear it, build a luxury housing with a luxury level of water usage, all without anyone batting an eye? But building workforce housing requires a herculean effort to pass while facing strong opposition. I want to shift land use planning from the luxury rural sprawl we are currently allowing to attainable workforce density in and around villages and amenities.

6. The current Official Community Plan (OCP) has this policy: "B.2.1.2.1 Zoning changes should be avoided if they would likely result in a larger island population than is expected under the development potential zoned in 2008. Exceptions to this policy are to be few and minor and only to achieve affordable housing* and other objectives of this Plan."

*As defined by the BC government, the provincial definition of "affordable housing" is housing that costs no more than 30% of household income.

Do you support retaining this policy? If not, what policy would you put in its place?

Eric's Answer:

First of all, your definition of affordable is incorrect. The correct definition comes from the Salt Spring Island Official Community Plan: "affordable housing describes rental or owned housing that can be acquired with 30 per cent of the median gross income of families or individuals on Salt Spring Island." The Salt Spring definition reduces the flexibility of the housing provider to cover costs as rents must meet that 30% of median income as opposed to 30% of the renters income.

Secondly, this policy is a great example of some of the problems with our current OCP/LUB. It makes single family homes on sprawling properties the rule, and workforce housing the exception when in fact it should be the other way around. If we must limit growth, and we must, then we should allot limited growth to those who provide services to the community or are long term residents to the community first. We need to reduce luxury rural sprawl and increase attainable workforce density, not add density to our existing sprawl.

General Questions:

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about your position on issues or actions that you, if elected, would propose?

Eric's Answer:

Check out my website, EricGMarch4Trustee.ca for my complete platform as well as my writing on various topics.