

Note to Mayor and Council

The OCP review: foundations to settle before the plan proceeds

Submitted by Heather Miller:

June 19, 2026

Dear Mayor and Council

I send this note now because Council will be considering its relationship with the Islands Trust at this meeting (item 11.2), and the protection of water on Bowen is central to the shared responsibility of the two bodies. If appropriate, I ask that it be placed before Council with that item and considered, rather than received only for information. As I am asking Council to give direction, this is a matter for Council, not an operational matter for staff.

It accompanies, but does not repeat, my fuller submission to the OCP Public consultation process, provided to the Steering Committee, and separately to Council as background. My concern is narrower: the foundations the OCP review is being built on, while they can still be addressed, on issues directly tied to the Islands Trust mandate.

The concern

The Steering Committee's Terms of Reference require the revised plan to comply with provincial legislation, follow the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and meet the Islands Trust object to preserve and protect. These are the plan's own high standards. My submission documents where the draft does not yet meet them on water, and most particularly groundwater.

One example shows the foundational nature of the problem: the draft still frames its water provisions around the repealed Water Act, a decade after the Water Sustainability Act replaced it and brought groundwater under provincial licensing, and still cites the repealed Waste Management Act. A legal review may correct the citations, but it will not ask the harder question of whether policies built on the superseded framework still hold. Beyond this, the infrastructure baseline did not take in the private-well and groundwater picture that serves much of the island, and the plan assumes Vancouver Coastal Health protects groundwater, a role VCH has said is not its mandate.

What I ask Council to consider

None of this is a criticism of the Steering Committee. The point is the opposite: it is an unfair burden to ask volunteers to produce a generational plan against these standards if the underlying work has not been done and given to them. I ask Council to consider whether that foundational work, in particular an independent review of the water and groundwater questions and of the island-wide temporary-use-permit provision, should be commissioned or confirmed before the draft proceeds to a bylaw.

Thank you for your consideration.