

ISLANDS TRUST CANDIDATE: JS McINTOSH-FASH

The following words were submitted to *Our Isle & Times* by the Candidate

Hello Isle & Times readership - I'm JS, running for Local Trustee. More about me and my experience is in the *Xwe'etay* newsletter, or email jsoffgrid@proton.me to get together. In short: I'm here to stay. I'd like to use this space for my views on the Islands Trust, because this paper is known for its questions, and an election should give answers.

What's your #1 Priority as a Trustee?

My priority is power to the community on land use decisions.

One, the community means all of us. Lasqueti holds many diverging views, and a Trustee should get the full range on record through accessible input, and publish how values in tension were balanced in each final vote. You'll hear from me proactively on open questions. We're all neighbours here; an elected official should engage with the core concerns of every part of the community, or the problem just gets kicked down the road.

Two, power to the community means protecting the power we have. It's rare for locals to have as much say on land use as we do through the Trust. Through qRD, Lasqueti would hold one vote on a board of five or more rural directors; our Local Trust Committee gives Lasquetians two votes of three. On Trust Council we hold two of twenty-six votes, equal with every other trust area, though Council has asked the Province to reassess whether equal representation should continue.

Three, our land use bylaws should reflect what this community has decided is important about its own way of life. They should be applied where they protect that and updated through due process where they don't, with demonstrable consultation deciding the complicated cases. Completing the Community Plan is a major part of that, as is building civic tools that make rules and processes easier to follow than legalese buried in old agendas.

Four, environmental carrying capacity is the hard limit to community power over land use. I support more conservation options for landowners, and fairly conducted studies of what Lasqueti's watersheds, aquifers, forests, and shorelines can sustain, so future planning can rest on real information.

Five, local power is only as effective as it is participatory. Good standing with First Nations,

fellow Trustees, staff, qRD, the Province and this community makes deliberation likelier than unilateral decisions, saves money, and gets us to outcomes that work for everyone.

Will you Trim the Trust?

Yes, in how it's organized. The Trust is undergoing major structural change, and for good reason. A 2022 external review brought forward fifteen recommendations for improving performance. Council has asked the Province to review the Act twice, and been turned down twice. Our Community Plan is eight years into its update, unfinished because of capacity constraints.

Let's be clear though - abolishing the Trust would lose Lasqueti more than it gains. Planning, its cost, and its consultation requirements don't disappear. The Trust runs about \$55 per \$100,000 of assessed value; on a \$500,000 property that's roughly 10% of your tax bill, versus the regional district's 50%. Even if moving planning to qRD halved that cost, you'd save about 5% of your bill. Not nothing. But is that really our asking price for giving away our virtually-unheard-of majority say on land use decisions? We'd also lose the statutory exemptions from provincial density rules and the tax exemptions for conservation covenants that come with being in the Trust Area. These, and the Trust's contribution to many of our on-island nature reserves, all help Lasqueti stay Lasqueti regardless of what happens in a given Trust term.

Still, projects need to be finished. An organization years behind on its projects cost \$11.8 million in 2026, and continuing without structural change is untenable. Working out which changes to the powers of Trust Council and priorities of staff actually serve local projects, reach clear service targets, and create answerability for public spending takes Trustees willing to wade through 600-page agendas, recognize where Lasquetian interests are at stake, bring forward proposals on the public record, build consensus with other islands, and report back clearly.

Gutting the Trust is easy and shortsighted. Turning this ship around takes committed work. The budget is the first thing up for review next term, and the Policy Statement soon after. If elected, I'll jump right in.