

Denman is too big to be governed this way.

Here is what we're trying to do, why we want to do it, and what it will mean for you. In plain words. Five minutes of reading.

What is “Denman Town”?

It's a campaign. We want Denman Island to become its own town. Like Bowen Island did in 1999. Like Okanagan Falls did last year.

Right now, Denman doesn't have a mayor. We don't have a town council. We don't have a town hall. Fourteen different groups make rules for us. Most of them aren't from here.

We want one elected council. Made up of people who live here. Answering to people who live here.

That's it. That's the whole idea.

What stays the same?

A lot. We will still be on the Islands Trust. We will still be in the Comox Valley Regional District. The Conservancy still owns its land. The Trust still cares for nature. The school stays. The fire hall stays. The clinic stays. The roads stay roads.

The ferry will still break down sometimes. We can't fix that with a town council. But we'll have a louder voice when we ask BC Ferries to do better.

What changes?

We get to choose our own mayor and council. We get a town hall. We get our own bylaws — written by us, for us. We get our own bylaw enforcement officer. Someone who actually lives here. Someone we can talk to.

The Islands Trust stops running our day-to-day affairs. They still approve our big planning document. But they stop sending an off-island chair to run our local meetings.

Our property tax to the Islands Trust goes down. The money we save funds our own town.

Will my taxes go up?

The honest answer is: we don't know yet. That is what the study is for.

What we do know: Bowen Island's residents pay roughly the same total taxes today as they did before they incorporated. The money moves around — less goes to the Trust, more goes to the town — but the total stays close.

Salt Spring's 2017 study found a small increase, around \$10 per year on a \$480,000 home, and a small business increase too. Bowen's experience has been a wash.

A study for Denman would tell us our number. The Province pays for the study. Not us.

What about water and power and the internet?

Every house here runs on a well. Every house has a septic tank. Most of our power lines hang from poles. The forest takes them down most winters. Some of us run out of water most summers.

No one is in charge of any of that for the whole island. Not the Trust. Not the regional district. Not BC Hydro. Not the Province.

A town can't replace BC Hydro. We can't dig everyone a new well. But a town council can plan ahead. It can apply for grants. It can put backup power at the fire hall and the school. It can study the water and tell us how much is left. It can stop the next outage from being a surprise.

The internet finally got better in 2023. CityWest came in. Most homes have fast internet now. But it took four years of volunteers begging. A town would have done it in eighteen months.

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You buy a sticker. You stick it on your bag. You drag the bag to the nearest big road on a Thursday morning. Sometimes that's a kilometre away. The truck comes once a week in summer. Once every two weeks in winter.

Recycling? You drive it yourself. To the depot. There is no curbside pickup. Volunteers run the depot. Volunteers run the bottle depot. Volunteers run the Free Store, which is wonderful and which we love.

Bowen has curbside pickup for both trash and recycling. So do most small towns in BC. We don't, because no one with the money to fix it answers to us.

A town can fix this. Curbside pickup. No more stickers. Maybe a green bin for compost too. The Free Store stays. The depot stays if we want it. But it stops being the only option.

What about the oysters?

Baynes Sound is BC's biggest shellfish farm area. It's right next to us. The federal government runs it. Not the Trust. Not us.

A town council can't take that over. But it can speak for Denman in the room when decisions get made. Right now, no one speaks for Denman in that room.

What about the K'ómoks Nation?

The K'ómoks Nation is becoming a self-governing nation under a new treaty. The treaty was signed last year. The province passed the law two weeks ago.

They share this land with us. They have for thousands of years.

A town council can sit at a table with them as a partner. As a real government. The Trust can't do that the same way. We want to do it right.

What about housing? What about the food bank?

105 households on Denman are in “core housing need.” That means their home is too small, too expensive, or falling apart. That is one in seven households.

People sleep in trucks. People sleep on the beach. People live in trailers in the winter. The volunteer society that runs the food bank also runs a public laundry now. And a shower program. And free phone charging. Because some people on this island have nowhere to wash their clothes.

Forty percent of us are over 64. Only one in nine is under 20. The young people who grew up here cannot afford to come back.

A town will not build big houses for newcomers. The Trust still has to approve our community plan. They will keep it green. They will keep it Denman.

But a town can let your daughter put a small cabin behind your house when she comes home from school. A town can be the partner BC Housing needs to fund the Denman Green project — which has been “shovel ready” for two years and still has not started, while Hornby's 26-unit project is being built right now. A town can apply for the housing money the federal and provincial governments give to towns. We can't get that money now.

We are not asking for a different Denman. We are asking for a Denman where the people who already live here can keep living here.

What is happening next?

1. Sign this petition. We need a few hundred signatures from Denman people.
2. We send the petition to the BC government. We ask for a Restructure Study.
3. The Province pays for the study. It takes about a year.