



Q4 Membership Survey - Questions & Responses - **Housing**

Q. How are we enforcing housing policies?

A. Out of control landscaping and long grass – A number of homes are vacant or multi family. Housing received confirmation of grant funding to hire an SIB member to cut lawns for the summer months. A posting will be online during the week of May 11 – 15 for this position. Private owners and Tenants are expected to keep the lawns tidy and cut. The housing department will give warnings for long grass and un-kept yards to tenants. If they are not cleaned up, housing will hire someone to clean up and mow the lawn then charge the tenant.

- **Rusted vehicles on lawns** Private owners and Tenants are required to follow the Land Code and Land Use Plan. The control of broken down, rusted, unusable vehicles, boats, trailers... is a Joint venture with the Lands Dept. especially where private owners are concerned. SIB Tenants are required to have insurance on all vehicles.
- **Random debris which attracts rats** – posters were hand delivered to all homes on Sthitsem & Pipehom informing all private owners and tenants what they need to do to keep rats away from home.
- **Pressure washing of homes** – is a joint responsibility with tenants and the housing department.
- **General curb appeal** – this is a joint responsibility of every citizen of SIB.

Q. Why do we have so many vacant homes?

A. There are six SIB owned homes that have been significantly damaged by SIB members who were evicted (these members are being charged for the damages they have caused to the unit). There is not enough replacement reserve to repair these homes. Two quotes have been received for the repairs of each home. These quotes range from \$200,000 - \$500,000 (duplexes) to repair. Housing is working on plans on how to find dollars to repair or to tear down and rebuild.

There are also three units that have been repaired and new families will be moving in between June 1 and July 31. Those members moving home from off Reserve need to give one month notice to move.



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Q. Why does it take so long for repairs and renovations to be completed? More info on repair budget please? Explain the numbers and why it takes as long as it does?

A. There are a number of factors that are impeding the expedience of getting repairs completed in a timely manner. It is always the housing department's desire to get all repair items completed as quickly as possible in the 140 homes we look after. Our Maintenance team currently consists of one Maintenance person, and two off on medical leave. The last year has also seen significant challenges in getting supplies, this includes items such as windows, doors, appliances, and skilled trades' people to do the work. Two main reasons for this is because of the exponential rise in the cost of all materials, supplies and labour in the construction and renovation industry and, the shortage of materials and vendors due to the boom in new builds, and renovations all across BC.

A. Repair budgets are directly related to the amount of rent that is charged to each home. In 2013 SIB standardized its rental rate for all the rental units. These rates have not been increased since that time, however the cost to repair and replace items in the homes have had significant increases over the last number of years. This has become even worse during the pandemic.

For those who are interested, housing can provide a statistical breakdown of the rental rates and where the rent dollars are spent for each group (phase) of rental homes.

Q. How are we preparing for the future in regard to housing space for growth on Seabird? In 2015 there was a Housing Strategic plan completed that stated the following:

A. SIB projected housing needs are based on three potential growth rate scenarios: low growth rate (1.9%), a historical trend growth rate (3.6%) and a high-growth rate (5.7%). Given the vast difference in these projections, the number of houses needed by 2035 falls into a large range; 164-589. While the actual number is dependent on growth, it is understood that at the very minimum, 164 houses are needed to accommodate those Members on the waitlist...

Generally SIB Housing is building on average 4-6 buildings every two years. In the last three years 12 units have been built (6 duplexes). In the last four years there have also been a number of individual families who have built their own homes.

2016 – 1 family

2017 – 1 family

2018 – 1 member purchased an existing home in SIB

2019 – 3 families

2020 – 3 families



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- **1 family completely renovated their family home**

2021 – 5 families who have broken ground and 3 who will be breaking ground this summer.

- **1 family who is purchasing an existing home in SIB**

The BC Housing Project, which was applied for in 2019/2020 is moving forward. This is a large project including 50+ units. Please watch for further updates as this project starts to take shape.

Q. Can we have a program to residents clean up their yards and in their homes? Help them if they don't know how?

A. The Health Department has family support workers who provide this service. There are some communities where they have an Auntie program. This is where Elders in the community come along side moms and dads who may need some extra help with all they need to do and learn while raising their little ones.

Q. Hire someone to work only in arrears?

A. Arrears is a significant challenge in most Nations all across Canada and to have someone dedicated to collection arrears would be a huge benefit. Another option is to send uncollected arrears to a Collection Agency. Arrears can build up because of a number of things; the two biggest ones are when rent is not paid on time and in full each month, and when there is damages to a house (broken doors, windows, not using appliances such as washers and dryers properly, furnace filters not being changed, not using the bath fans or stove fans to keep air moving in the house). Other things that can cause arrears to build up are being charged for things like not mowing the yard, towing vehicles, causing damages to another unit by willful damage like break and entering or accidental damage like play fighting and punching a hole in the wall...

Q. Implement a course on how to care for your home - mandatory for tenants. More accountability as a tenant. Pride and ownership. When moving out can people put in sweat equity to contribute to renovations needed?

A. The requirement when someone moves out the unit must be clean and ready to rent. Sometimes there are things that Housing needs to do due to regular wear and tear on a unit such as a fresh coat of paint if needed, preventative maintenance such as servicing the appliances and sometimes upgrading them due to the age.



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Q. Home inspections more often? Follow through by housing and C&C to renters written notice. Why is the community allowed to bring down Seabirds identity as a whole with bad conditions of houses/yards? What does this say about us?

Q. Can there be a mandatory clean-up of lawns: If not cleaned two written notices and then final eviction notice to create standards?

Q. Fines for garbage pile up as it results in rat infestation?

A. The family support workers are a significant help to housing when it comes to teaching families on their case load how to keep their house clean, how to maintain their yard and such. However, there are many compounding factors that make this very challenging for many families that have this kind of hands on attention to learn the skills needed. Often, growing families living in rental homes that are too small for them cause significant problems. But housing does not have larger units to put growing families into.

The option is we evict the families, but, where will they go, back home to their families which causes even more overcrowding and other social issues. If families are moved to larger homes, they are not able to look after these homes and in some cases can't afford the rent plus utilities. If they are evicted, and family can't take them in, they move off reserve, the rent for the size of family is 3-4 times more expensive.

The family support workers also let us know when things are not going well and a home is getting damaged or over crowded. Housing is often brought into family meetings to help explain the policies and to try and work with the family before an eviction happens.

A few solutions would be to build 2nd and 3rd stage homes, like the family home, where larger family units can learn more of the skills they need to be successful renters. This would be temporary housing for 2-3 yrs as the parents learn the skills needed. However, there needs to be homes for families to move into. This also speaks to the fact that we need to work with the families who have steady incomes and are amazing renters to encourage them to invest in their own homes and become home owners.

Q. What are the specifications to get a rental? Family size? Affordability? Where is this information for us to see?

A. On pages 21, 22, and 24 of the housing policy it outlines the eligibility criteria for being a renter in an SIB home, which states:



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2.4. Eligibility

The primary applicant must be 19 years or older and a member of the SIB.

i. Applicants with an outstanding uncollected debt with SIB will not be considered for housing assistance until outstanding accounts are in good standing.

ii. Certain criminal activity could render an applicant ineligible for certain houses located near schools and parks and is subject to the discretion of the Chief and Council. Chief and Council will fully disclose the reasons for rejecting an applicant and the applicant may appeal the decision (see Policy #4.6 Appeals); and

iii. Applicants must submit a current criminal record check with their application.

Eligibility for a subsidized housing unit is governed by the following set of guidelines for Non-Band members caring for minor Band members are eligible:

i. if the band members in a unit vacate,

ii. the non-band member will have 90 days to vacate the unit and once the minor band member becomes of age,

iii. the unit must have the head of household transferred from the non-band member to the band member.

Applications will be screened for eligibility. Those applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will be notified, and given the reasons why they are not eligible and information that might help change that assessment.

2.5. Application

Only those eligible in accordance to eligibility requirements as described in Policy 2.4 may apply for housing. Candidates must submit a fully completed application to the Housing

Applicants must resubmit their application annually.

Applications for new Rent-to-Own and SIB rental units and old rental units follow the same process.

Procedures

The applicant will:

1. Complete an application form and supply all necessary information;

2. Update the application annually before January 1st (reapplications will be accepted between November 15 and December 31); and

3. Request an explanation if the application is rejected.



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The Housing Department will:

1. Assist the applicant with filling out the application form;
2. Provide the applicant with a letter of receipt of application;
3. Notify the applicant of the decision of the selection in a timely manner;
4. Keep unaccepted applications on file for a period of one (1) year;
5. Accept updated applications between November 15 and December 31, and
6. Inform the applicant as to how he/she can appeal the decision and/or re-apply. (see Policy #4.6 Appeals)

Note:

If an applicant applies in more than one category of house he/she will not be given priority in all categories.

The Housing Department cannot necessarily give priority to an applicant because of family emergencies or custody issues. Housing will not be allocated based on future housing consideration.

2.7. Occupancy Standards

Householders are not permitted to contravene the following SIB Occupancy Standards. There shall be no more than 2 persons per bedroom. Parents do not share a bedroom with children (over adolescence).

Guidelines for Applying Occupancy Standards

- a. In recognition of a variety of co-parenting arrangements, a child who resides with his/her parent(s) a minimum of 40 per cent of the time will qualify as a permanent member of the household when determining eligibility and appropriate unit size.
- b. Single applicants are eligible to apply for bachelor and one-bedroom units.
- c. Couples (two individuals) are only eligible to apply for one-bedroom units, as they would be under-housed in a bachelor unit.
- d. To maximize the use of limited one-bedroom units, priorities for available units is based on the applicant's ability to pay rent and are as follows:
 - i. Couples;
 - ii. Single applicants with a documented medical need for a one-bedroom unit; and,
 - iii. All other single applicants.



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2.8. Tenant Selection - New Rental & Rent-to-Own Housing Units

Tenant selection for new housing units is the sole responsibility of the Tenant Selection Committee. The selection process will be systematic and fully transparent. The purpose of the selection criteria is to select applicants on the basis of relative merit and in accordance with the community housing plan and policy. The Housing Department will select all applications that are eligible for the particular type of housing unit that is available and forward the applications to the Tenant Selection Review Committee.

The Tenant Selection Committee will review the applications and select the recipient based on the following criteria:

- a. Only applicants on the waiting list will be considered for new housing units
- b. Source and level of income and stability (ability to pay);
- c. Where the prospective tenant stands on the waiting list;
- d. Debt free to the SIB (see note #2 – pg. 25);
- e. Three references (previous landlord, employer, personal); and
- f. That the size of family is compatible with size of unit.

Housing Management will notify all applicants of its decision within five (5) working days of making a selection.

Rejected applicants have the right to a full explanation and to appeal the decision. (See Policy #4.6 Appeals)

Note:

1. Members receiving a new rent-to-own housing unit will not be entitled to another new home for at least twenty (20) years following receipt.

2. Debts and arrears include any debt to the FN that is not being paid as stated in the agreement between the FN and the candidate at the time the loan was made.

Debts in arrears can also refer to unresolved damage issues from a previous rental unit. Bankruptcy and Insolvency does not waive or void outstanding debts owed to the FN.

3. Any debt with SIB must be paid in full prior to being housed.

2.10. Selection for Older Rental Housing Units

SIB Housing Department will select new tenants for existing rental housing units.

Procedures

1. When an existing rental unit is vacated the Housing Manager will notify the next person on the housing waiting list who is eligible for a house of the available size.

2. Tenants in older rental housing units can maintain their position on the housing list.

3. Accepting an older rental unit does not reduce the householder's chances of receiving a new Rent-to-Own housing unit.



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If you'd like a copy of the housing policy please call the housing department and we can email or print a copy for you.

Q. Will we see tiny, energy efficient homes on Seabird for future rentals?

A. This would be an amazing addition to the homes in SIB. It is an option that has and is being explored.

For those members who are thinking about building their own homes and want to take advantage of the rebates for energy efficiency, you are invited to join the online meeting Thursday May 13 @7:30pm to learn about the rebates that are available. Please call the housing department for the link to the meeting.

Q. Who is covering the rent for vacant homes?

A. Of the six units that are damaged – 1 is under a CMHC mortgage and that cost is being covered by SIB.

Q. Why are members paying for storage when housing fails to meet renovating schedule?

A. When SIB housing has to do a renovation or repairs in a unit where tenants are currently living, we work with the family to arrange access to the area of the unit that needs to be worked on. If the family has personal items in the area the maintenance team has to work, the family is asked to have the area cleared out. Once the team is done the work in that area, the family can move it back and we move onto the next area. There is no need for a storage bin of any sort.

Renovations that are being done in privately owned homes, are all done by contractors the family chooses to use. There is a legal binding contract signed between the contractor and the family so everyone agrees to the same work and timelines. In a few cases families that have a lot of work to be done in the home have asked where they can store their items. The options are to move it somewhere within the home, rent a storage locker in Agassiz or Chilliwack, or there is the option for the family to rent a big steel box. As with any renovation, unforeseen delays may happen with materials or products, which is out of the control of SIB.

Q. How can Seabird get rid of drug dealers and addicts that make our community unsafe?

A. The answer to this question lies within the whole community coming together and standing up to say that this type of drug activity is not ok. Please call the RCMP when you note these drug dealers in the community.



Seabird Island

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Q. When will there be a new development for building more homes?

A. There are areas within SIB that have been identified for potential new residential subdivisions. I defer to the Lands Department to help in answering this question.