

Referendum

◀(O)▶ *Sq'éwqel (Seabird Island Band)* ▶(O)▶

SPECIAL EDITION



MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2025

9 AM - 8 PM

MILL HALL

YOUR VOICE
YOUR VOTE
YOUR FUTURE



WHAT IS THE LAND CODE, AND WHAT IS A REFERENDUM

REFERENDUM

A referendum is a community vote that allows members to approve or reject important decisions, such as land use changes or lease agreements.

LAND CODE

The Land Code is Seabird Island's own set of rules for managing our land. It gives us greater control and the power to make decisions for ourselves, without interference outside governments. Under the approved Seabird Island Land Code 2017 – 2032, lease agreements over 25 years require community approval through a referendum.

WORKING LANDS AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO SEABIRD ISLAND'S FUTURE

The Seabird Island Land Use Plan 2017 – 2032 describes working lands as land zoned commercial, light industrial, agriculture, and forestry. Working Lands are an integral part of any community, and Seabird Island is no exception. By planning now for the future of the working lands, we will help ensure a level of economic security for current and future generations.

The Sqéwqel Business Park is a 50-acre parcel located on the corner of Chief Hali and Chowat Roads that is zoned specifically for commercial and light industrial purposes.

Referendum Vote!

June 2nd | Mill Hall

AE Concrete

Increasing AE Concrete's lease to 75 years will help it plan for the future. It will also secure Seabird Island a steady source of revenue. AEC currently pays \$80,000 a month in rent.

WHAT'S BEING PROPOSED

To extend AE Concrete's lease from 25 to 75 years, which will still be reviewed every five years.

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF HARRIS



Dear Sq'ewqel Band Members,

On June 2nd, we'll be making an important decision together—one that affects not only today, but our future generations. As members of Seabird Island, it's our responsibility to care for our land, our people, and the choices that shape our Nation's path forward.

"This referendum gives each of us a voice. It's our chance to carry forward the work of our ancestors, who always thought ahead to protect the well-being of those who would come after them. Now, it's our turn"

One of the questions on the ballot is about extending AE Concrete's lease from 25 to 75 years. AE Concrete rents a 16-acre section of the Sq'ewqel Business Park—a space we set aside for commercial use to help our Nation grow. Today, we receive nearly \$1 million a year in lease payments, plus property taxes, from AE Concrete. Having strong business tenants like this supports Seabird Island's goal of becoming self-sufficient and economically independent.

*When we all take part in decisions like this,
we build unity, strength, and a shared future for Sq'ewqel.*

Let's honour our responsibility to one another—and to our children and grandchildren. Let's show up, speak up, and vote.

I hope to see you at the polls on June 2nd.

WHO IS AE CONCRETE

AE Concrete Products Ltd. manufactures precast concrete components and operates a batching plant in the Sqéwqel Business Park. The company holds a 25-year lease on a 16-acre parcel, with lease terms reviewed every five years to ensure payments align with current market value. It is being requested to increase the 25-year lease to 75 years.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS:

- \$80,000/month in lease payments
- Lease is indexed every 5 years to match land value
- Annual property tax contributions
- 75 years of reliable, secure income for the Seabird Island

This agreement would bring over \$1 million/year in revenue and long-term economic stability for Seabird Island.

AE CONCRETE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

- \$20,000/year Seabird Island Band Member bursary's
- Projected to have 25 to 45 new jobs in the next 5 years
- Job training with Seabird College and Community School
- Supports infrastructure development, for example, AE Concrete brought on gas infrastructure.
- AE Concrete was a gold sponsor for the 2025 Seabird Island Festival, contributing \$ 10,000.



WHY SEABIRD ISLAND NEEDS AE CONCRETE



- This lease isn't just about money, it's about jobs for our people, training for our Youth and members, and funding that stays in the community for what we need most.
- Attracts more businesses to Sqéwqel Business Park, which was specifically zoned for commercial and light industrial purposes to grow Seabird Island's source revenue (money we earn on our own, not from government funding).
- This long-term lease helps Seabird Island grow on its terms, with steady income and local jobs.
- AE Concrete is our anchor tenant, meaning they were the first business to move into a new development - *a sign of trust and partnership*.
- Their early support and being seen in the business park helps show other companies that it's a good and trustworthy place to do business.

WHY SEABIRD ISLAND NEEDS ITS OWN MONEY (OWN SOURCE REVENUE)

Government funding does not always cover all needs. Own money helps pay for things that are important to the community but not always funded, like fixing homes, building programs, supporting youth and Elders, and having quarterly hampers for our Band members.

It gives us choices. With our own income, we can decide how to spend it based on what matters most to our people, without waiting for outside approval.

It builds a stronger future. Own-source revenue helps Seabird plan long-term, support jobs, and grow businesses, creating more opportunities for the next generation. We need to think ahead for our children and grandchildren and what we would like to leave for them to continue to grow and build a strong Seabird Island.

WHY THE REQUEST?

A longer lease provides AE Concrete with the certainty to plan long-term investments and operations.

FAQ AND ANSWERS

On May 14, 2025, a Community Referendum Meeting was held, giving Sq'ewqel Band Members the opportunity to ask questions and share concerns. A panel of representatives, including Lena Barichello (AEC HR Manager), Chris Armstrong (AEC Operations Manager), Nigel Selvadurai (CEO, Sq'ewqel Development Corporation) and Jon Espley-Jones (CFO, Sq'ewqel Development Corporation), were present to provide responses and clarity.

HERE ARE THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

Q: How many Indigenous people has AEC hired?

A: 14 Indigenous staff since 2024, 9 from Seabird.

Q: Are First Nations staff let go after probation?

A: A 6-month probation applies to all staff. Some pass, some don't. Layoffs are rare and based on seniority, not background.

Q: Is training provided?

A: Yes. Entry-level to certified trades. AEC and their union (CLAC) fund free training programs for all staff.

Q: Do Band Members get preference in hiring?

A: Yes. AEC aims to hire locally, it's better for the community and business.

Q: What are the job requirements?

A: Positive attitude, basic tool use, ability to lift 50 lbs. More skills are needed for higher-level roles.

Q: Are Band Members hired throughout the lease?

A: Yes. AEC is committed to hiring local people long-term.

Q: Does AEC support further education?

A: Yes. AEC has paid for training at BCIT and other programs.

Q: How much does AEC pay its employees?

A: \$21.53–\$39.14/hr (May 2025). Also: RRSP matching, bonuses, and benefits.

Q: How many current job openings?

A: Around five now, with more expected in summer.

Q: Why a 6-month probation?

A: To fully train staff and ensure a good fit for both the employee and employer. It's also part of the union agreement.

Q: Do you respond to all job applicants?

A: Not always, but staff try to respond personally, especially to Seabird applicants.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Q: What do Seabird Members gain from leasing to AEC?

A: Local jobs, \$20K in annual bursaries, training programs, and nearly \$1M in lease income per year plus annual property taxes.

Q: Can Seabird get discounted concrete?

A: AEC doesn't make liquid concrete, but discounts are possible for precast items.

Q: Why did AEC choose Seabird Island?

A: Great community, available industrial land, and strong infrastructure. This is our home now, and we could not ask for anything better. We love it here.

ENVIRONMENTAL & SAFETY

Q: Will there be environmental impacts?

A: AEC follows strict audits and uses a water recycling system. No wastewater leaves the site.

Q: Is concrete radioactive?

A: No. Concrete is made from natural materials and is safe.

Q: How much water is used?

A: About 30–70 cubic meters/day, including recycling.

Q: Are the lights or trucks disruptive?

A: Around 20–30 trucks daily. The lights are LED and adjustable if they're bothering anyone.

LEASE & BUSINESS DETAILS

Q: Why a 75-year lease?

A: It allows AEC to make significant, long-term investments in the site and infrastructure.

Q: Can AEC sell or transfer the lease?

A: No. The lease cannot be sold or reassigned.

Q: Will permanent buildings be added?

A: Yes. There are two phases: operations first, then permanent structures with cranes.

Q: What happens if it's not approved?

A: AEC will continue working with Seabird as long as possible, but investing long-term in the site and other infrastructure might be more challenging.

Q: Does Seabird keep control of the land?

A: Yes. The lease is reviewed every five years, and the land returns to Seabird Island at the end of the lease.

Q: What if AEC under-performs or breaks rules?

A: The lease makes provision that Seabird Island can remove them for non-payment, damage, or violations.

Q: How much revenue does Seabird Island get from this lease?

A: About \$900,000/year net. Property taxes are about \$60,000/year.

Q: Who decides how lease income is used?

A: Seabird leadership. Funds go into a separate account for future use.

Q: Will a business plan be shared?

A: AEC is open to sharing a long-term plan.

Q: Are profits guaranteed for Seabird Island?

A: Lease includes regular rent increases, and 5-year reviews tied to inflation (CPI).

Q: Who are AEC's competitors?

A: Other precast firms in the Lower Mainland.

CONCERNS FROM BAND MEMBERS

Q: What if Members feel disrespected or unfairly fired?

A: AEC couldn't comment on individual cases but says they aim to treat all staff fairly and work with them.

Q: Why are there no dividends to Band Members from lease revenue?

A: Distribution decisions are made by Chief & Council.

VOTE

**June 2nd
Mill Hall**



INFORMATION



VOTING DAY

- Date: Monday, June 2, 2025
- Time: 9:00 AM – 8:00 AM
- Location: Seabird Island Mill Hall

REGISTER TO VOTE

To participate in the referendum, you must be 18 years or older and a registered voter. Registration is handled on-line.

Visit OneFeather.ca to register or scan the QR code and follow the steps.

STAY INFORMED

- Scan the QR code for more information about the Referendum
- Follow Sq'éwqel Seabird Island on Facebook where we share updates
- Send an email to eatocc@seabirdisland.ca
- Visit the Band Office lobby, where you'll find an information booth and staff ready to answer any questions.

