

**Lac La Biche**

# Post

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## Lac La Biche County council ready to roll out vehicle policy

**ROB MCKINLEY**  
*Lac La Biche Post*

**LAC LA BICHE** – A Lac La Biche County vehicle that made its way to a country music festival last year is one of the main drivers behind a new vehicle policy that councillors say will better monitor the municipal fleet.

The new policy relates to municipally-owned passenger vehicles, and is expected to be presented to council for approval at meeting later this month. While councillors await the new policy, at least one elected official wanted to ground all 127 vehicles in the municipal fleet until he understood why some staff were allowed to take County vehicles home overnight, and what punishments others staff were issued for abusing the current vehicle policy.

“I want accountability and I want to know which jobs really need them, and which staff we are just handing pickups to,” said councillor Sterling Johnson, who has been spearheading a review of a vehicle policy since last August when he heard that a staff member had detoured on a return trip from a conference in Central Alberta, taking the assigned municipal vehicle to a country-music festival. “It’s a free-for-all, it really is.”

Johnson went further, targeting specific levels of municipal staff in a scenario he played out at a recent public meeting.

“Just because you are a foreman and say that you are going on road checks — but you never go on road checks — you get to take a pick-up home,” he said, also adding anecdotal stories where road maintenance staff were taking vehicles home with them because they lived too far away from public works shops. Johnson said what he believes is taking place is “abusive” and “a slap in the face to the people of this county.”

Lac La Biche County CAO Dan Small, the administrative boss who oversees all municipal staff, wasn’t aware of the issues.

“That’s 100-per cent news to me,” he said,



Rob McKinley photo

Lac La Biche County council wants better policy control on staff use of municipal vehicles.

asking the councillor for more details about the accusations.

Small said about a dozen of the municipality’s 127 vehicles are taken home by staff on a regular basis. He said vehicles are equipped with GPS tracking, and said there is a process for staff members to sign-out vehicles, and that process is monitored regularly by senior management and documented in monthly reports that council can view. The entire policy is reviewed annually.

Lac La Biche County’s Manager of Equipment Services Les Cote said any abuse of the current

vehicle usage system is “next to nothing — if at all.”

### Who takes what?

According to municipal information requested by *Lakeland This Week*, three supervisors in the municipality’s Transportation department take vehicles home to allow for quick response to any road emergencies or issues. In winter months, two other vehicles are taken on a rotating basis by operators conducting early morning road inspections.

*See “Vehicle policy” page 23*

## TV show reaction hoped to draw more attention to Lac La Biche area

**ROB MCKINLEY**  
*Lac La Biche Post*

**LAC LA BICHE** – A CBC television series that highlighted the people and history of the Lac La Biche area will hopefully have a lasting effect, says one of the local people who appeared in a segment in the recent *Still Standing* episode.

Hosted by comedian Jonny Harris, the program is in its eighth season, highlighting Canadian communities trying to overcome challenging times.

“The message I wanted to show was that we are all really, really supportive of each other,” said Myssoon Tarrabain, a retired local teacher and the daughter of Lebanese settlers who came to the community more than 70 years ago.

The Lac La Biche episode was filmed last summer, and aired in late January. The episode featured information on the Indigenous origins of the area, the multi-cultural settlement of the region, local industry, the commercial fishery, tourism and local business. Tarrabain spent more than half a day with Harris and show producers last summer. Her segment on the television episode is about 10 minutes. She laughed when she said she hoped it got the message across in that compressed time-frame.

“The community is so beautiful and I think the episode showed that. I hope people watching from all over Canada see it and say, ‘Holy mackerel, if there’s real



Evan Seccomb – CBC photo

CBC TV’s *Still Standing* show host Jonny Harris walks down Main Street Lac La Biche with Myssoon Tarrabain during last summer’s filming of the half-hour episode that aired at the end of January.

estate available there, I want to move there.”

Tarrabain — who still hadn’t seen the full episode days after it aired — said being interviewed for the show made her realize how special her community is.

“I hope I was able to express the love and appreciation we have for this wonderful community,” she said.

Brenda Robitaille was another resident interviewed. She watched the show the night it aired with a dozen or so friends at the Lac La Biche Legion.

Her segment focused on the commercial fishery that once thrived in the community, linking to the mink ranch industry, cultural groups and tourism.

Robitaille also said the segment in the half-hour episode was done well - considering the vast amount of history and information the area has to share.

“They could have done a couple hour shows on all the history and culture around here,” she said with a laugh, adding that the finished product was done very well, and made the community look good to the outside world. “I think the filming showed how beautiful it is here, and I like how they showed the representation of all of our cultures and heritage.”

She was also happy the show’s producers chose to highlight the commercial fishery — something her late husband, Myles Maskalyk, was an integral part of.

“It was nice for me, for our family, to speak about the significance of the commercial fishery, the Métis fishermen, of the lakes and the land. Miles was a man who lived off the land. He loved this place like we all do,” she said.

Tarrabain and Robitaille said they have had many calls and messages about their TV time. Both say it was a good experience they were proud to do.

Portions of the Lac La Biche episode and others in the eight-year history of the show can be found on the CBC TV website or in the links of the original article about the program at [www.lakelandtoday.ca](http://www.lakelandtoday.ca).