

# BEST MUNICIPAL/CIVIC AFFAIRS STORY

The competition as a whole — I was a bit surprised at the dearth of enterprise stories in this category. Many of the entries simply reported on meetings of one sort or another, with no effort made to follow up what took place (or was said) at the meeting and dig a little deeper into the topic.

## SARAH ROGERS

### Nunatsiaq News

An unusual subject and a nicely written story that picks up all the loose ends. Clever lead! It lacks only a comment or two from dog team owners and/or other area residents.

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## NUNAVUT ᑎᓄᓂᓐᓂᓐ

### Arviat's polar bear monitor works the overnight shift

"It's a good job, a bit scary at times"

**SARAH ROGERS**  
ARVIAT — Last Wednesday night in Arviat sounded like Canada Day, the 1st of July, with residents posting on social media about the bangs and explosions going off out-

polar bear hunt quota. So WWF and the hamlet teamed up to fund the position, hiring Ikakhiik each year from October to December — the period when polar bears are migrating north. And so far, so good. While there were seven defence kills of polar bears in Arviat in 2010, when Ikakhiik's position was created a year later, there were only three. And haven't been any nu-



Leo Ikakhiik stands by a dog team in the east end of Arviat — a popular attraction for polar bears who can smell the dogs' seal meat. (PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS)

lar bears killed in the area. Fortunately, he added, a bear has never harmed a human in Arviat — and it's his job to keep it that way. Ikakhiik remembers one night shift, finding a group of seven- and eight-year-olds playing street hockey at about 4:30 am, unaware of a polar bear lurking behind a nearby building. "I had to send those kids home," he said. "Those bears hang around until their stomachs are full." Ikakhiik's three-year contract with WWF and the hamlet is up at the end of the year, but he — and many others in town — hope to see it extended. "As long as they want me, I want to keep doing this," he said. "It's a good job, a bit scary at times, but I always try to play it safe."



A polar bear rummages around the dump outside of Arviat. The hamlet hopes to renew a contract with the World Wildlife Foundation that helps pay a polar bear monitor to protect the community from nuisance bears. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HAMLET OF ARVIAT)

## '...She would have had a chance'



Firefighter Ryan Dropp, Lieutenant Chris Brownrigg and firefighters Ellen Brownrigg and Mousen Rice are hoping to drum up support for a program that will send firefighters to city medical emergency calls. Trevor Greenway photo

Chris Brownrigg of Low's fire services. He explained that the response time for a call like this would have been about seven minutes. Brownrigg and a group of fellow firefighters presented a plan to council Nov. 20, 2012 that would send a minimum of four firemen to a medical emergency as first responders. The training for the firemen is completely covered by the province, as is equipment like a defibrillator and other medical supplies. That's why many can't understand why the municipality squashed the plan. "I think it's a shame that there are people in the municipality who are certified and can help and we're not using those assets," added firefighter Mousen Rice. "Everything is paid for by the government. The only thing that is not a main hours, how much is a life actually worth to the municipality?"

According to Low director general, Franceska Garowski, council was never against the idea of having first responders run out of the firehall, but it was more a matter of money. She told the Low Down that there just isn't room in this year's budget for such a program, no matter how little the program may cost taxpayers. "This is an internal issue and it wasn't budgeted for — it's as simple as that," said Garowski. "For people here, even if it means \$20 a year, that's a lot. It really bites into their fixed income." With the election around the corner, the municipality thought it best to wait for a new council to reconsider first responders program. Part of the reason for the delay is because of aging population. Out of the 920 people who live in the village, 31 per cent are over the age of 55. The municipality receives about 60 ambulance calls a year; 40 per cent of those calls are for the elderly. The Low Firefighters Association is hoping to drum up support for the program and it already has about 100 people who signed a letter of support. Brownrigg and Rice are calling on the public to voice their support at council's next public meeting Oct. 2.



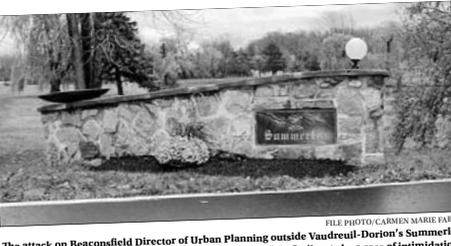
Maurice Mezier says his daughter may still be alive if Low had a first responders program in place. Photo courtesy Maurice Mezier

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## TREVOR GREENWAY

### The Low Down to Hull & Back News

A well-written story which understated the emotional aspect but worked in very effectively the reference to the father fighting back tears. The comments from the municipal official kept things in balance.



The attack on Beaconsfield Director of Urban Planning outside Vaudreuil-Dorion's Summerlea golf course last October was originally deemed by Sûreté du Québec to be a case of intimidation. FILE PHOTO/CARMEN MARIE FABIO

## Private investigation fees into Beaconsfield civil servant's attack climbing

**Carmen Marie Fabio**  
carmen.fabio@yourlocaljournal.ca

While some in Beaconsfield are questioning the town's decision to pay for both a private investigator and extra security measures after a municipal employee was threatened and beaten last year, several councillors said they support the decision to ensure both his safety and his ability to do his job effectively. Director of Urban Planning Denis Chabot was attacked outside Vaudreuil-Dorion's Summerlea Golf Course early last October and following threats to Chabot and his family in the form of an email and telephone call, council reportedly authorized the additional security expenses soon after. "Council was aware that there was an investigation," said District 6 Councillor Rhonda Massad, who requested a special financial meeting April 17 to discuss the issue, "but I never dreamed it was to the tune of the money that we're spending."

To date, Beaconsfield has reportedly footed a bill of \$20,000 to Ab Facto private investigators to supplement the Sûreté du Québec's (SQ) investigation of Chabot's beating as well as another approximately \$20,000 for security services at Chabot's residence. Massad expressed reservations to commit further taxpayer dollars to a private investigation on top of already paying a designated portion of taxes to the SQ. "We do try to be judicious with city funds," said Mayor David Pollock, "but there are events that transpired that we felt necessitated having somebody else assisting the investigation and provide guidance to the city."

Both District 3 Councillor Wade Staddon and District 4 Councillor Pierre Demers said they felt the amount was reasonable. "I think it's the least we can do," Demers said. "These are exceptional circumstances." While the president of the Beaconsfield Citizens Association Greg Stienstra echoed the need to protect Chabot within the capacity of his role at City Hall, he questioned why six months after the altercation, police had not made any arrests in the case and had not questioned any of the councillors. "It's disconcerting that this type of thing can happen to anybody," he said, "and six months later, no charges have been laid. That worries me."

Stienstra was also critical of what he described as a vacuum of information from elected officials. "They don't have to tell us everything," he said, "but they should at least give a summary of the police investigation's status." Mayor Pollock said that he expects the investigation to wrap up in the near future and that, to his understanding, the investigator is working in tandem with the SQ. Staddon told *Your Local Journal* that he felt it would have been unconscionable for the city to do nothing if there was some indication that the beating was related to Chabot's work function. "We can't have our municipal officials beaten up for doing their job," he said. "If they can't function, council can't function." Staddon said he understood concerns about the amount pointed out that if Chabot had prioritized his job duties to the full extent, an equal number of citizens would complain about it. "Unfortunately, democracy has a cost," said Staddon. "And sometimes you have to pay that cost."

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## CARMEN MARIE FABIO

### Your Local Journal

Good job of finding and using multiple sources to illuminate a story where all the facts weren't yet known.

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**Judge:** David Gordon, Professor Emeritus of Communication & Journalism, University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin  
• Number of entries in the Best Municipal / Civic Affairs Story category: 28

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