

Veteran paramedic fighting for his pension

John Godin retired four months ago after 39 years of service but accounting snag, bureaucracy holding up cheques

By Terry Fleurie
Staff Writer

Eganville – A recently retired member of the County of Renfrew Paramedic Service who gave 18 years of service to the county and a total of 39 years to emergency care is protesting what he calls an embarrassing delay in the processing of his pension.

John Godin officially retired on March 1, wrapping up his career of almost four decades, 22 as a commander and the last 18 of which were spent with the county.

Now, however, he finds himself a victim of bureaucracy as he is still waiting to receive his first pension cheque.

The Eganville resident was outside the Renfrew County administration building at 9 International Drive in Pembroke Tuesday, quietly protesting he has not yet received his pension due to a discrepancy between two different accounting systems that no one in the county business offices seems to be able to rectify.

“The issue is there’s a discrepancy between the two parties, the paramedic service and the county, and their payroll,” he explained of the reason for the delay.

He said the paramedic service joined a scheduling agent called *Jacob’s* about 15 years ago, which was designed to share information with the county’s payroll system.

“They (*Jacob’s*) would have to do up a document to send over to the county, the county would have to enter it in, and then we’d get paid from the county,” he explained. “The county’s payroll system never corrected itself, the two never talked, and things were happening in one program that the other program was not recognizing.”

“It’s not just mine. There are many people involved,” Mr. Godin noted. “I’m just the first one they’ve picked on, pointed out and are now pushing to take.”

“One of the reasons I believe, heartfelt, is that I’m not a unionized member, so I’ve got no backing from anyone,” he added. “I’ve got no ability to have lawyers on hand to go in and deal with this, or union reps to deal with this on my behalf. There are many other individuals in the same boat as I am. They just haven’t retired yet.”

Mr. Godin said he and colleagues were told for years not to pay attention to their pay stubs regarding hours, vacation time, banked time, as it was inaccurate but it had been corrected.

“The county wouldn’t change that; we were told to follow *Jacob’s*,” he said. “So, every year, when I got my holidays, I knew how many holidays I had. If I had had time that’s banked, I knew how much was in there.”

“And I have been using only that for 15 years,” he added. “There are discrepancies, but we get them corrected. However, when we see a discrepancy and we correct it in here, if that paperwork doesn’t go

over to the program that the county runs, it doesn’t get changed in that program.”

He cited an example of taking a day off that was put in as vacation. He then has to go to the scheduling person and correct it with the county. If that is not done, then he ends up allegedly owing the county hours, which appears to be the issue in this case.

“I have no ability to change my schedule, to change my hours, to change any documentation on my behalf. So, whatever is in there, has been put in by the people who tabulated the data.”

“I can only go with the data given to me whether I have time left to take off,” he continued.

When he was off work for six weeks due to surgery, he received a letter from the county saying he was losing one day of vacation for his time off.

“They never told *Jacob’s* that I would lose this day so that never came out of my calendar. I only take the time off that I’m entitled to because I have no input into this. I have no say. That’s one of the problems.”

“I’ve been retired since March 1, 2023, and expected my documentation would have been put in, because I used my holidays, stat time and banked time up to my retirement,” he added. “And I expected the documentation would have been in that I retired March 1, which means, OMERS (Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System), my pension plan, would have said you’re retired, you get a cheque March 1.”

However, that did not happen despite Mr. Godin going to the county on several occasions to ensure he had completed and handed in all the required documents.

“Everything was ready to go so that there would not be a delay,” he remarked. “I was assured everything was fine.”

After a month, he emailed OMERS to see when he could expect his pension and was advised they had not received his Record of Employment from the county. He contacted a member of the administration at the paramedic service who told him there was a discrepancy and they were trying to get it worked out for him.

Mr. Godin said he owes nothing in terms of hours, as he only took off what he could from the information available.

A second month went by and he kept calling the service only to learn this issue was passed onto another member of the administrative team who is in a similar situation.

“He has negative numbers on his payroll stub that he feels, when he retires, he’s going to be affected just like me. He wants to get this resolved, but there’s the issue of new people in the department who have no idea of the history and that this has been an ongoing problem for many, many years that has never been corrected.”



Retired Renfrew County Paramedic John Godin was parked outside the Renfrew County administration building on Tuesday, silently protesting the delay in processing his pension. He said this was not the way he wanted to make a point.

“Although it was resolved when we changed programs, they just never corrected it on their end,” he said. “That’s my belief. They say I owe them hours on the county’s program.”

No Where To Turn

Mr. Godin has been repeatedly told by the payroll clerk the county would not correct the payroll stubs, but the *Jacob’s* system was what mattered.

“Now they’re having meeting after meeting. I don’t know the resolution. I don’t get any confirmation from the county.”

“I don’t know where to turn. I don’t have a union backing me,” he added.

As part of management, he wasn’t unionized. Most of the service is unionized. He has not yet spoken with the Chief of Paramedics, Mike Nolan, but believes the person handling the issue has communicated with him.

On Tuesday, he parked his truck at the entrance to the county building to inform staff and anyone going to the county office of what he has been going through.

“It’s coming up on four months,”

he said. “My last correspondence with the individual who is representing me said I need to know by Friday (May 19) if my documentation has been put in.”

“I did not receive a call. I received a call on Saturday stating that they’re working on payroll first.”

Mr. Godin did get an email from OMERS Friday stating they had not received any documentation and if they do, it could be another 20 days to process his claim.

“Now we’re looking at July,” he stated.

While OMERS will cover any owed back payments, that does not help Mr. Godin to cover his current expenses.

Worthless Feeling

“I feel that what I’ve done for the county is really worth nothing in their minds,” he stated. “I’ve been into thousands of houses to take care of people who needed me when they were ill, sick, injured. Now, I need someone to take care of me as I step into the realm of retirement, and I’m not getting that.”

“I’m not getting the support or the ability to smoothly transition. It’s really put a sour taste in my mouth

due to the fact I’ve been waiting these many months and now have to fight.”

Mr. Godin didn’t care what type of reception he would get at the county building yesterday, saying it could basically be the reception he has been getting the last four months -- that his case is not important and he is insignificant.

“To this point, I’m frustrated that I don’t know what to do, so I have to do this,” he said.

He is hopeful his action will lead to the cases of other discrepancies being corrected.

“I would not want any of the individuals I’ve worked with over the course of my career to have to go through what I’m going through right now.”

He has received many calls of support from individuals who cannot

believe the way he is being treated after all he has done in his 18 years of service with the county and 39 years with the service.

He said this issue has seriously affected his emotional, physical and financial status.

“This is not what I wanted to do to make a point,” he said as he sat along International Drive Tuesday morning, with signs propped up against his pickup truck and the county administration in the background. “Based on all I have done for the county, and the people of Renfrew County, and the corporation, that I would be treated much better ... that it would have been a smooth transition into retirement.”

“It has been anything but. This has done nothing but financially devastate me and potentially impact me for the rest of my life.”

County responds to employee complaint

The County of Renfrew issued a statement Tuesday afternoon at 3:16 “addressing a recent complaint made by an employee to the media regarding their treatment within the corporation”.

“The employee complaint, which surfaced through media channels on May 23, raised allegations related to their treatment within our organization. While we respect the employee’s right to express their concerns publicly, we take these matters seriously and are committed to ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace for all employees. As this complaint is related

to personal financial obligations, the county ... respectfully declines to comment publicly on this matter.

“We want to assure our employees and the public that we are dedicated to fostering an environment that upholds fairness, respect and equal opportunities. We firmly believe that every employee should feel valued, supported and treated with dignity. The County of Renfrew remains dedicated to the well-being and success of its employees. We value their contributions and are committed to ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity, respect and fairness.”



Firefighters from the Eganville Station of the Bonnechere Valley Township Fire Department clean up debris Saturday afternoon around a crash scene on Highway 60 (Bonnechere St.) at the eastern entrance into the village. They also assisted paramedics with removing the occupants from the vehicle and also with traffic control.

Three were injured in roll-over Saturday at entrance to village

Eganville – A 38-year-old Ottawa woman has been charged with impaired driving after her Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) went out of control coming into Eganville on Highway 60 Saturday afternoon and rolled over in a field.

Shortly after 1:30, members of the Killaloe Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) responded to a crash on Bonnechere Street East in Eganville. The driver of the vehicle lost control as it was descending the hill into Eganville, crossed the centre line and rolled over in a field on the Schauer farm after snapping off a

small maple tree.

Firefighters from the Bonnechere Valley Station of the Bonnechere Valley Fire Department assisted with the removal of the occupants of the vehicle who received minor injuries and were treated by paramedics. Three people were taken to hospital.

As a result of the investigation, Mellissa Glover was arrested and charged with impaired operation and impaired operation - blood alcohol over 80.

The accused was released, and is scheduled to appear in court on July 12, Her driver’s licence was suspended for 90 days.

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YOUR LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST

<p>Wednesday May 24</p> <p>A few showers HIGH 12°C (54°F) LOW 4°C (39°F)</p>	<p>Thursday May 25</p> <p>Sunny HIGH 16°C (61°F) LOW 6°C (43°F)</p>	<p>Friday May 26</p> <p>Sunny HIGH 20°C (68°F) LOW 9°C (48°F)</p>	<p>Saturday May 27</p> <p>Mainly sunny HIGH 24°C (75°F) LOW 11°C (52°F)</p>	<p>Sunday May 28</p> <p>Mainly sunny HIGH 25°C (77°F) LOW 13°C (55°F)</p>
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