'Two hatters' facing sanctions

By: Harry Rudolfs

Three part-time fire-fighters employed by the Halton Hills Fire Department are facing sanctions from their union for "two-hatting"—the term refers to part-time fire fighters who are employed by HHFD and have full-time jobs as fire fighters elsewhere.

The three could face fines, suspensions or even expulsion from the union. A disciplinary hearing was held before a tribunal of the International Association of Firefighters on Jan. 16. But according to Fred LeBlanc, Ontario district vice-president, we may never know the results. "The tribunal has 60 days to release a decision, and I don't know if it will be made public," he said.

Leblanc doesn't believe that these members are being unfairly singled out when many other fire-fighters have part-time employment. "I've been involved with this issue for 15 years. This rule does exist and if they don't like it there's a process to change it. We are a democratic union."

Controversy has arisen as to whether the Town of Halton Hills should pay their legal fees. The Town has declined to do so unlike Caledon which is going through a similar situation.

Chief John deHooge thinks that the situation in Halton Hills is different from Caledon which is dependent on its two-hatters. Caledon currently has 35 two-hatter part-timers in their system, while HHFD has four two-hatters out of a part-time roster of 81, in addition to 32 full-timers (soon to be 34).

"We used to have more two-hatters," said deHooge, "and the mayor and council have been aware of the situation since 2006. These fire fighters bring value to the community, but the service won't be adversely affected by their loss. Actually we're hiring one or two more full time fire fighters, but the formal process hasn't started yet."

Some confusion exists because the term volunteer and part-timer is often used inter-changeably. "All of our volunteers are referred to as part timers... you'll find that more and more departments have transitioned to the notion of part timers," said deHooge.

Part-time fire-fighters are given pagers and are paid to respond to calls if available. Fire fighters often have outside jobs because they have blocks of time off-duty and their skills make them very employable.

However, Fred LeBlanc has some concerns about his members holding down two jobs with fire services. "You can't control emergencies. If one of our members is called to a house fire at five in the morning and then has to go to their full time job, that's not really fair to the other firefighters."

Chief deHooge expects his part-timers to be fit for duty when responding to an emergency: "We wouldn't know when they've worked their full-time job in Mississauga, nor would we know if they've had a particularly busy shift or not. We rely on them to exercise good judgement when they respond to calls in Halton Hills."

Despite claims that the HHFD will lose 100 years experience without its two-hatters, deHooge suggested this is a spurious argument. "I can tell you that in previous years 2014-16 we also lost that amount or more. It's not uncommon in any fire service because of retirements. But I would categorically say we continue to put out fires, respond to emergencies and public safety is in no way compromised."

DeHooge also wants to respond to an anonymous source who stated there was widespread dissension, low morale and apathy within the ranks of the HHFD.

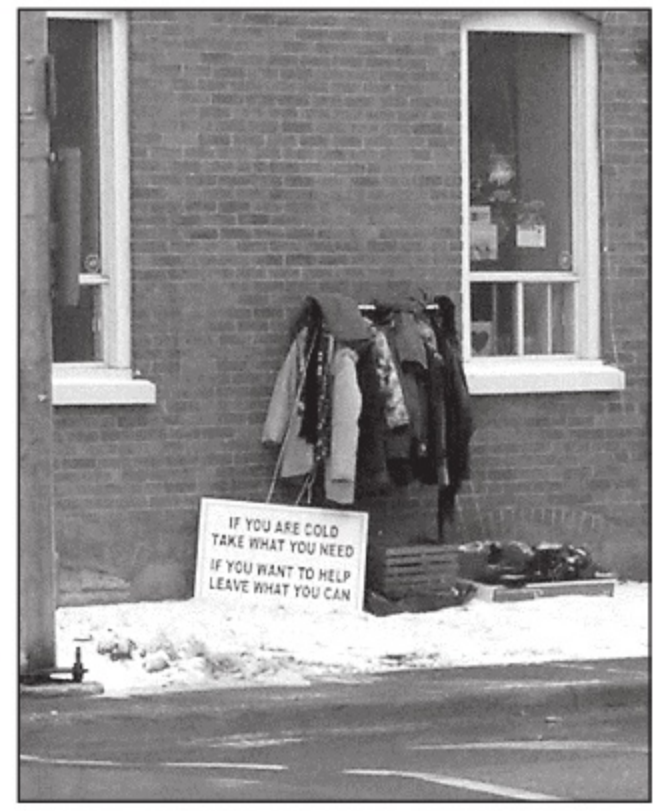
"Nothing could be further from the truth," he said. "The opposite is in fact the case. At the end of the day, they (the two-hatters) will have to make their decisions whether they want to continue to work as fire fighters in Halton Hills or not."

Letters

The views expressed in these published letters are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The New Tanner Publishing Ltd.

To the Editor;

I took this picture today. I saw it and realized that it shows how a small town like Acton cares for itself. This is truly still a small town with a big heart. I have lived here for 39 years and no matter where I go I'm proud of my Town and what it means to be a resident here. To give back to the community that raised me is a privilege and an honour.



To whoever created this coat rack, I commend and thank you. To those who need to use it, please know that people in this town do care for you. In an age where our government and those we give the privilege to serve us seem to be serving themselves let us continue to look after each other. Let's keep Acton a caring, loving and engaging town. As residents let us help those among us who need help and acknowledge those who are able to stand in the gaps and provide help and assistance when and where it is needed.

Thank you Acton

Legion News

By: Sharon Graham P.R.O. ~ Branch 197

Washer toss has started again on Monday evenings. We have also started an 8-ball league. If you are interested, come in on Monday evenings at 6:45 p.m. and sign up or let the bartender know you are interested by phoning the Branch at 519-853-0910.

February 20 is our family fun day. This is always a good day for the kids as well as parents. We are looking for a committee to help with this day. If interested, please leave your name at bar. All kids our welcome to this day. You do not have to be a member.

Newfie Night is March 25 with a Jiggs dinner which includes the dance at 8 p.m. with Tim Kennedy and the Roadhouse boys. Cut off date for the tickets for the dinner is on March 9. Tickets will be available at the door for just the dance. Join us for a great toe tapping night.

Check the boards behind the bar for upcoming events. We invite people to join our Legion. If you are 18, you are eligible to join. Pick up an application at the bar or at legion.ca under membership section. Return the completed form to the bar.

Please do not forget to wear red on Fridays. It is very important that we support our troops. If you wear red on Fridays, your name will be entered for a draw and you will have a chance to win a prize. We need to let our troops know that we care and support them all over.

Members, your membership chair needs to know if you are moving or have changed your phone number. If you have and you have not let them know, can you please come into the bar and give them either your new number or address? Also, some members have not paid their 2017 dues. You can do this at the bar as soon as possible.

If you have nothing to do on a Thursday afternoon, why not come to the Branch and play euchre? Our lady's auxiliary host the euchre every Thursday afternoon. It starts at 1:30 p.m. and everyone is welcome. If you are not sure how to play euchre, they can show you.

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FUGITIVE OF THE WEEK

Desire Mongelard

Description:

Mongelard, of Mississauga, is 39 years of age, and is described as 5 6 , 155 lbs with black hair and brown eyes. He is known to frequent the areas of Oakville, Mississauga and Brampton.

Wanted For:

- Drive Disqualified
- Drive with more than 80 mgs of alcohol in 100 ml of blood
- Fail to Appear in Court

Tips can be submitted to Crime Stoppers

See something, Hear something, Say something at **1-800-222-8477** (TIPS), through the web at **www.haltoncrimestoppers.ca**, or by texting **Tip201** with your message to **274637** (crimes)