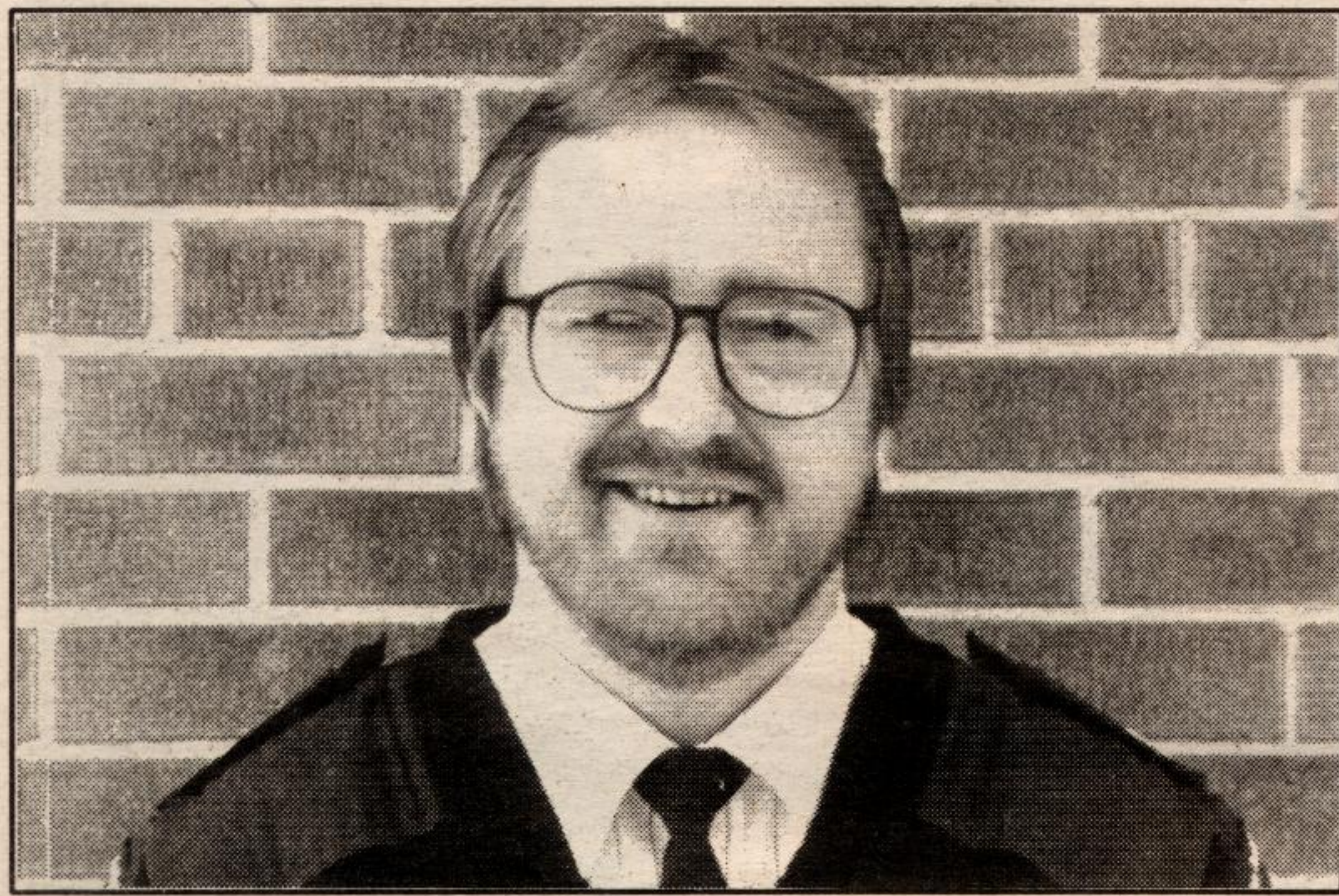


# Town's Ambulance brigade still needs dollars



**TOUGH TIMES:** Acton's Yvon Essiembre says while the local St. John Ambulance brigade has rebounded from a cash crunch last summer, times are still tough. The brigade presently needs a new paint job and tires for its mobile unit. (Doug Harrison photo)

**BY DOUG HARRISON**  
St. John Ambulance brigade is finally seeing some light at the end of a long tunnel.

Following months of financial struggles, coping from being booted from their Norval headquarters in July and donning shabby uniforms every day, the brigade has managed to stay afloat and somehow beat the recession with much thanks to the public.

Uniforms, at a cost of \$150 per member, are coming, money has been tucked away with events planned in the near future, but the brigade mobile unit needs an overhaul and the brigade still needs money.

Acton resident Yvon Essiembre, a three-year brigade member, says

although they're not out of the woods yet, it's a far cry from the scare he received last summer.

"We could have just closed but the public reacted," said Essiembre, 33. "Everything we do, supplies and donations, is generated by the public. We still need donations and are still low (in dollars), but we're better than we were."

The uniforms could have been ordered earlier but the brigade membership, which currently boasts 16 First Aid volunteers compared to five last summer, had to retain new members for six months before they could order. Brigade members, who receive free standard First Aid and home health care training, are still needed as well.

"We need our flashes (St. John logo) to be recognized," Essiembre said. "It will be nice, people will be able to find us easily. We needed the change; I had to buy my own shirt because they had only size 15 and I have a 17-inch neck."

The public's response during the summer and fall months was greatly appreciated by Essiembre as a number of areas were addressed.

Besides the public responding with a \$1,000 donation, Bob Honour, manager of Acton Canadian Tire, gave the mobile unit a total inspection and tune-up. The unit, however, still requires a paint job which, with new ambulance specialty tires and stickers to be added, could cost upwards of \$3,000.

The unit is the brigade's biggest concern because the paint is peeling off and the tires are cracked.

An Acton business is also allowing Essiembre to use a photocopy machine free of charge for advertising purposes. And Cantel Inc. in Georgetown gave St. John a cellular phone, which will eliminate members fretting to locate a phone when required to phone 911.

The Kapuskasing, Ont., native added the brigade does offer First Aid and CPR courses, but "only a little bit of money goes to the brigade and the rest toward bills."

Essiembre mentioned the public's involvement has been invaluable in keeping St. John Ambulance in Halton Hills. During the recent Acton Peewee Hockey Tournament, they received \$150 in donations.

"The public's also helped toward our courses. Last year we had about two per month and I thought we would be really slow at the start of this year," explained Essiembre. "But we ran four or five in January." He added the courses alternate between weeknights and weekends to accommodate everyone.

The brigade meets every Tuesday for training from 7 to 9 pm. In the summer, there are dramatizations of accidents for members to grasp dealing with an emergency situation.

"People don't realize how important the St. John Ambulance brigade is until something happens to a member of their family," said Essiembre. "If we don't exist and something happens at the Fall Fair... at least if we do, there's someone there to try something."

For more information on the First Aid and CPR courses, call St. John Ambulance brigade member Yvon Essiembre, 853-4889; David Burke, 877-1045; or Carol Merten, 873-1425.

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While anyone of any age can be victimized, women, seniors and persons with disabilities are usually more targeted. These guidelines will help you to protect you and your family in reducing crime and maintaining a more secure and safer environment.

- Use only first initials with surname on mail boxes, directories, etc., if you live alone.
- Never open your door to a stranger without proper identification.
- Arrange a system so that someone has a key to your home and is aware of your whereabouts at all times, especially if you live alone.
- Don't display large amounts of money in public or keep it in the home.
- Don't leave keys hidden in obvious places.
- Walk on well-lit streets near the curb and away from alleys, particularly if you must walk alone at night.
- When in public, always be aware of your surroundings. Be mindful of persons loitering or acting suspiciously.
- If you suspect you are being followed, go to the nearest well-lit public place or populated area. Yell, if necessary, to attract attention.
- Don't hitch-hike. Once trapped inside the vehicle, it is difficult to escape.
- If you are being sexually or physically abused at home, workplace or social setting, help is available; report the offence.
- Be aware that any form of sexual activity without consent, even in a marriage or on a date, is a sexual assault and a criminal offence.

*Constable Riddle's Corner is a weekly feature brought to you by the community-minded businesses surrounding this column. We urge you to strengthen local industry and trade by supporting these businesses.*

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