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Pension protest confronts MLA

By Penny Caster Advocate staff - February 22, 2008

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Dressed in a pig costume, Grant McLean of St. Albert is greeted by Red Deer North MLA Mary Anne Jablonski on Thursday. McLean was in the city protesting problems with his pension.

by Jeff STOKOE/Advocate staff

A couple donned pig and judge costumes on Thursday to protest the unfair treatment they say they have received from the province over a pension issue.

The pair, Tena and Grant McLean of St. Albert, paraded outside the campaign office of Mary Anne Jablonski, Red Deer North's Tory candidate in the forthcoming provincial election.

They and their supporters plan to picket various campaign offices throughout the province to draw attention to their problem.

"I didn't know it was Easter yet," said Jablonski with a smile as she strode towards Grant McLean in his pink pig costume, her hand outstretched.

McLean's beef with the province dates back to 1982, when after 14 and a half years in the Canadian military he was offered the job of deputy director at the Calgary Correctional Centre.

He was assured his military pension was transferable and his offer letter included that assertion, he said.

But it later turned out the provincial employee who provided that information was unaware that the provision allowing federal pensions to be transferred to provincial positions did not apply to either military or RCMP pensions.

After years of trying to get satisfaction on the issue, McLean sued the province in 1999.

The lawsuit has not yet got to the stage of being heard by a judge.

McLean, a former mayor of Airdrie, said he is now on leave from his current job but has put in 25 years with the province and is concerned about his impending retirement as he approaches his 60th birthday.

"So literally a third of my pension is lost," he said.

"You guys looked after your own pension, you called it a gratuity or whatever," he said to Jablonski.

McLean was referring to members of the Alberta legislature voting themselves an RRSP allowance and more than doubling their severance packed in 2001, an action criticized at the time by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

"I don't have a whole lot of background," said Jablonski.

"Thank you for coming out and listening," he said.

Later he told members of the media that he goes by the credo his parents taught him.

"When you make a mistake, you 'fess up, make it right and move on."



That's what McLean believes the province should do.

Contact Penny Caster at pcaster@reddeeradvocate.com

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