

Retired RTÉ workers plead for access to pension fund

By Nicola Byrne

RTÉ PENSIONERS have pleaded with the Public Expenditure Minister to allow them an increase as the cost of living escalates.

Retired RTÉ employees who are on a coveted defined-benefit scheme say they have not had a raise since 2008 and they're 'feeling the pinch'.

The State old-age pension has risen 16% during the same time.

Pensioners' spokesman Tony O'Connor said 'an unconscionable chasm has arisen between our pensions and the cost of living'.

He said: 'We have tried every single avenue to represent our case... endless letters to all relevant Government ministers and senior officials to track the labyrinth that prolongs the injustice.'

'We are not the Pat Kenny and the Ryan Tubridy of RTÉ. We are the ordinary workers - electricians, hairdressers, journalists.'

'Yes, the pensions delivered for us for a while, but they're way out of whack now with the cost of living.'

The attractive defined-benefit scheme, which was phased out in 1988 due to its cost, delivers members a guaranteed 50% of their income on retirement.

The number of defined-benefit schemes has declined hugely in Ireland over the past 30 years, with only 558



HELP: RTÉ director-general Dee Forbes

remaining, according to the most recent statistics from the Pensions Authority. There were over 2,000 in the mid-1990s.

The RTÉ workers contributed 6.5% of their income each month to their pension fund in lieu of PRSI and the amount was topped up by the State broadcaster.

Like many other employees of semi-State bodies, they are not entitled to a contributory State pension because they did not pay PRSI.

Mr O'Connor, chairman of the RTÉ Retired Staff Association, insists they

are not looking for handouts, 'merely permission' from the minister to access more from their pension fund.

He told the Irish Mail on Sunday: 'The money is there in the pension fund. The fund is in rude health.'

'It's our money. It's our deferred wages. All we're looking for is to access it. We've been shoved around from pillar to post. We just want our money.'

The pensioners' application in 2018 for a 1% raise was eventually rejected in 2020. They then applied for a 2% raise 'to reflect the rising cost of living'.

'We are still awaiting a decision. What takes them so long?' Mr O'Connor asked.

'The civil servants rule this country. Did Robert Watt [Department of Health secretary-general and the country's highest-paid civil servant] have to wait two years for any decision?'

Mr O'Connor added that RTÉ director-general Dee Forbes and the board of the State broadcaster have been 'no help'.

He said: 'To be honest they won't even provide me with contact details for all our members, citing GDPR. I've never heard such nonsense.'

The pensioners have lobbied Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Public Expenditure Minister Michael McGrath and Culture Minister Catherine Martin on the issue.

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