

Volunteer Firemen

1981—indicate that 8,301,704 people in Ontario were provided with various levels of fire prevention and firefighting services. It should be noted that there is no legal obligation for municipalities to establish a fire department, although in recent years the Canadian Association of Fire Fighters has recommended that firefighting services be made mandatory for municipalities, through legislation.

Most municipalities recognize that they have a social obligation to organize fire protection services. In cases where municipalities have no fire departments of their own, special equipment and firefighting services are purchased through operating agreements with neighbourhood communities.

The basis of what is known as mutual fire aid is pre-planning to provide adequate manpower—in other words, volunteer firefighters and equipment—for given situations and locations, and to use men and equipment as efficiently as possible to the best possible advantage. The pooling of resources underlies the whole system of mutual aid. Mutual fire aid agreements are particularly effective in towns and villages where firefighting facilities are inadequate to handle emergency situations.

I have spoken about the situation in Ontario and I should now like to touch upon the situation in my riding of Brampton-Georgetown, where there are firefighters of whom we can all be proud. Chief Jim Brunne in Brampton and Chief Cunningham in Georgetown are to be congratulated for their dedication and service. Although Brampton is a city of approximately 160,000 citizens, it has 45 volunteer firemen in four different locations. The town of Halton Hills is divided into two areas. In Georgetown there are 45 volunteers and in Acton there are 35. These people are so well recognized in Georgetown that the entire volunteer fire brigade was named citizen of the year a few years ago. They are very dedicated people with a great sense of community. These are the ordinary guys who feel that their assistance to the fire department helps everyone.

In Brampton a volunteer is compensated on the points system. He or she earns five points per fire call and five points for attending a training session or for being on weekend duty. The average compensation is from \$150 to \$175 per quarter year. They are given \$40 per year, which is expected to cover such things as the cleaning of and the wear and tear on clothing. With \$40 per year, one smokey fire and the cleaning bill is shot. I saw the bill to clean the clothes that were in my apartment during a fire which caused only smoke damage.

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In Georgetown volunteers are given \$1,500 per year to cover the wear and tear on clothing and the cost of gasoline. It is interesting to note the difference in what is being paid in compensation in these two communities which are next to one another. To some the compensation may appear to be enough but I do not think to too many. We must be realistic. In Brampton there is an average of three to ten calls per month on volunteer time. In Georgetown there is an average of 200 calls per year. It is a busy fire department. The compensation and tax deduction simply do not cover the actual wear and tear on clothing, the wear and tear on volunteer's cars, the cost of

gasoline and the disruption in volunteers' time. I strongly believe that an increased tax exemption is warranted and would more adequately recognize the services and actual expenses of volunteers.

Volunteer firefighters are not easy to recruit. Every advantage we can give must be given to persons interested in becoming volunteers and to those who are already fighting a very serious threat to us all—fires. The employment of volunteer firefighters, or a combination of full-time and volunteer firefighters in lieu of only full-time firefighters attached to a fire department, can save governments millions of dollars annually. Volunteers are paid only when they are called to the scene of a fire. The saving to Governments which volunteers represent must be acknowledged. The federal Government must do what it can to encourage the continuation of volunteerism with respect to firefighters. They render a valuable service to the Canadian community at great risk to their own lives. I do not think anyone would argue that. I cannot imagine what many communities would do without volunteers.

The Hon. Member for South West Nova (Miss Campbell) is vitally interested in this particular issue. I gather, because she is present and I know of her interest and involvement in a similar motion, she will speak on it today. Many Members of my caucus have spoken to me over the last number of days because they knew my motion was coming forward. They are vitally interested in the subject. One said, for example, that in his ridings there were 42 volunteer fire departments and only one permanent one. Of course, he and others support this motion and ask that the Government give serious consideration to it and include it in the next Budget.

Just to give an idea of the numbers about which we are talking, the last available figures for Ontario indicated that there were 16,000 part-time volunteer firefighters, and that of 637 municipal fire departments, there were 503 part-time departments employing only volunteer firefighters. These following statistics for other provinces are for 1981. For some reason the other provinces are more up to date than Ontario in their statistics. At the end of 1981, Newfoundland had 4,175 volunteers; Prince Edward Island, 751; Nova Scotia, 7,000; New Brunswick, 3,063; Quebec, 14,771; Manitoba, 2,400; Saskatchewan, 6,000; Alberta, 4,500; British Columbia, 6,500; the Northwest Territories, 750; and Yukon, 150.

We cannot afford to lose these volunteers and the service they provide. It is about time that the Income Tax Act adequately recognized their valuable service to all Canadians. An increased exemption should be considered and included in the forthcoming Budget. The Minister of Finance has an ideal opportunity to win the respect of approximately 67,000 people across Canada through a very simple amendment to the Income Tax Act. I urge him to introduce such an amendment.

As I mentioned earlier, there has only been one change to the tax exemption since its original inception in 1953. That change was proposed in the Budget of the Hon. Member for St. John's West and later adopted by the Liberals. Once again