

the fact that the current exemption is not sufficient because of the effects of inflation over the past 14 years.

All across the country thousands of brave men and women, volunteer firefighters, offer their services to fire departments, fire associations and auxiliaries. Even in larger communities volunteer firefighters are heavily relied upon by full time firefighting forces. Without volunteer firefighters full time departments would not be able to provide the level of protection and service needed by communities.

I would like to read into the record the names of some of the departments and auxiliaries I represent as the MP for Huron—Bruce. I think of the towns of Zurich, my own home town where I have family members serving on that fire department, Wingham, Kincardine, Lucknow, Southhampton, Seaforth, Exeter, Hensall, and Bayfield. For those who do not know my riding there are places such as Dashwood and Huron Park which would be pleased to be recognized as also having volunteer fire departments.

I look forward to this coming Saturday when I will have breakfast with firefighters from the Brucefield Fire Department. I also had the pleasure of serving as one of the board members of the Bayfield volunteer fire department during my many years in municipal politics.

I congratulate all the firefighters of Huron—Bruce for the exceptional job they have done for us all these years. These brave men and women provide an invaluable service to the people of their communities. They literally have the lives of their friends, families, and neighbours in their hands every time they are called out. They serve their communities with honour, dignity and pride. It is for this reason we must acknowledge their importance and allow them exemptions of \$1,000 in recognition of their important duties to their community.

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk has better knowledge than some on the importance and value of volunteer firefighters. I can think of no better example of the dedication and bravery of volunteer firefighters than the Hagersville tire fire. That fire was deliberately set and took the time of many firefighters for many days. The extremely dangerous and volatile situation forced hundreds of families to be evacuated from their homes.

Who came to the rescue and became the first line of defence for the people in that area? Of course it was the volunteer firefighters of the local communities. They were outgunned by the fire but they persevered. After many long days, sleepless nights and personal sacrifice and hardship, they were able with some help to defeat the fire.

This is a great example of the dedication and professionalism of volunteer firefighters. Most of the time these individuals are ordinary people: farmers in our communities, store owners,

plumbers, electricians, and so on. Once they are called upon to put on their hats and boots they become the protectors of their communities.

Often when called these men and women are docked pay from their wages so they can serve their communities. I would like to recognize the employers who in many cases continue to pay the wages of their employees when they are out fighting fires for their communities or doing those other services normally attributed to fire departments.

In addition to the financial cost, they experience personal sacrifice in terms of loss of time with their families and physical and mental strain. I am sure many of us tonight can relate to an incident where family members were called away from an important family occasion because of a fire or because of an emergency within the community.

• (1825)

Volunteer firefighters do not just protect their communities, they also volunteer their time and resources to charitable causes and community events. As the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk has already mentioned, these men and women volunteer for everything from supporting and organizing minor hockey and softball to raising money for the needy and organizing holiday events and celebrations.

They are an integral part of their community. After all, what we are really talking about is a sense of responsibility of community and volunteerism. In today's world of financial hardships, increases in violent crime and deterioration of family values, we are relying more and more on the help, protection and generosity of others.

I am sure that every member has in the past and will continue in the future to volunteer in some capacity to some worthwhile charity or cause. In every community across this vast country volunteers are lending a helping hand to many different people and worthwhile causes. The elderly, the young, the disadvantaged and the disabled all rely on a growing group of generous people for support.

We must do everything we can to encourage these types of actions and therefore when it comes to giving some tax breaks to a group of people who protect their communities, I fully support this initiative and feel its passage is long overdue.

In conclusion, I would once again like to commend my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk for being persistent in giving the volunteer firefighters of Canada the recognition and support they deserve.

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak today on the motion presented by my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk.