

Income Tax Act

ry. In such conditions these men, and sometimes women, go out to protect property and lives.

We are looking for consideration for these men who give of themselves as a service to the community, and not only a service to their community but a service to society. It might well be that they incur costs from time to time; they might also incur losses. It has been suggested that we should at least consider the costs they incur in paying for their uniforms or other clothing, and in replacing articles such as wrist watches which they might lose when they are rushed to fires from whatever place they might be. At times they do not have time to dress properly when there is some urgency.

The government has considered granting them a \$300 exemption. This might have been fine some years ago, but as I listened to some of the speeches made here today, I think we have probably missed the boat with regard to where the responsibility lies. We seem to be getting on the treadmill of exemptions. It is dangerous to start granting exemptions to people here and there. Where do we draw the limit on exemptions for volunteers? I appreciate the work these people perform, but there are many volunteers within a community who give of their time and who put in endless hours at great risk to their lives. This is what volunteer firemen do. Also, we have the auxiliary police and various other organizations that give of their time.

I believe that in this regard it is the responsibility of the municipality and the people it represents. In most cases they have assumed that responsibility, such as, for example, the municipality from which I come. We do not have a paid fire department; we have only volunteers, and I must say we have an excellent group of people. I have been connected with that group for many years in my municipal experience and I know about some of the costs they incur. I have taken a very firm stand in asserting that members of the municipality and those who are responsible should ensure that those volunteers who give of their time and effort are provided with all the equipment that is necessary for them to perform their duties.

I am very proud that my community, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, makes this available to these gentlemen who protect life, limb and property. I believe we should look all across the country and put a little responsibility on the municipalities to ensure that these volunteers are properly reimbursed for the cost that they incur directly in the performance of their duties.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Andres: I will pretend I did not hear that because I have a few things more to say on this motion.

Mr. Peters: You will talk it out.

Mr. Andres: It may be so; that is my prerogative. We cannot put everything at the feet of the federal government and say: "You owe these people this and that and you should make exemptions here and there". In these cases the direct responsi-

bility lies with the municipalities involved and that is where, I think, we should put a little pressure to get them to accept those responsibilities. I am sure this matter has been discussed many times. It does not matter whether if these municipalities are in the province of Ontario, in the province of Quebec or any other province.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Andres: I suppose it does not matter whether it is a question on the order paper or whatever else it may be, we hope that the municipalities will come up with a uniform policy whereby volunteer firemen, those people who protect life and property, will be treated equally all across this great country. That is where the responsibility lies—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Andres: —and that is where it should be. I do not believe for a minute that we at the federal level should take on responsibilities which are those of the municipalities.

We have been referring to the great constitutional debate and the division of powers. There seems to be a tendency to put more power into the hands of the provinces. Perhaps we should take a closer look at placing a little more responsibility on the municipalities, the grass roots, the people whom they serve. This kind of service cannot be paid for in monetary terms because not one of these people gives of himself for a monetary return. These people are providing a service for the benefit of the community and for the benefit of society.

I am very proud to have been involved with this group of people who provide such a service to Canadian society. I believe we are doing them an injustice if we take away this responsibility from these people who are serving their country so well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. Accordingly, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2002)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.