

(Mr. Guay) is not here today, I think that all hon. members will agree that we should proceed now with motion No. 12. May we do so with the unanimous consent of the House?

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCain): Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McCain): The House will now proceed to motion No. 12.

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[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX

POSSIBILITY OF GRANTING FISCAL ADVANTAGES TO VOLUNTEER FIREMEN

Mr. Armand Caouette (Abitibi) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending the Income Tax Act in order to exclude from taxable income all indemnities received by a volunteer fireman in the exercise of his duties, as well as to allow such firemen to deduct from their income \$1,000 for all expenses incurred in the exercise of their duties.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to deal for the third time with this motion which I moved for the first time some three years ago. Since then, I have received a great many letters from and made a great many contacts with firemen from various municipalities throughout Canada indicating that it is about time the government once and for all look into the situation of these people who are doing Canadians a first-rate service, so that income tax-wise they may get their fair share.

Mr. Speaker, the interest of several hundred Canadians who perform the duties of volunteer firemen is at stake here. As I said a while ago, this is the third time I have spoken on this motion in this House. Each time, the Liberal government, through its backbenchers, managed to defeat the motion. Of course, Mr. Speaker, all the parties represented in the House spoke of the need to pass the motion. However, they made sure beforehand of having enough speakers to use up the time allotted and so kill the motion. I therefore ask my colleagues today, both government members and members of the opposition, to overlook their parliamentary hesitations and realize the importance and necessity of passing this motion. I sincerely believe, Mr. Speaker, that the House, that all hon. members, would benefit from putting an end to this cynical comedy that recurs constantly when a motion of this type is introduced by an hon. member.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote a press release I received from the Quebec Federation of Professional Firefighters which strongly supports the resolution of the volunteer firemen of the province of Quebec asking that an income tax exemption be granted them on the money they earn in the exercise of those duties. That resolution was signed by Mr. Alfred Morin,

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president of the Quebec Federation of Professional Firefighters. And I also received from the Canadian Fire Chiefs Association the report of the 60th annual conference which was held between August 24 and 28, 1975, in Mississauga. In the report, there was a resolution which reads as follows:

Introduced by the volunteer section of the Fire Chiefs Association of British Columbia regarding the increase in the income tax exemption for all volunteer firemen;

Whereas volunteer firemen must face an increase in their responsibilities and their functions as a consequence of the rapid growth in population and in construction;

Whereas it is ever more expensive to ensure those essential services to the collectivity;

Whereas the Income Tax Act which provides for a \$300 exemption for expenses incurred as a consequence of the functions of volunteer firemen has not changed since its inception 29 years ago;

Be it resolved that the Canadian Fire Chiefs Association asks the minister concerned both in the federal and in provincial governments to bring up the exemption to \$1,000, with the recommendation to the committee on resolutions to approve that resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we can see from that request by the Canadian Volunteer Firemen Federation that they are asking for a supplementary exemption not only to the federal government but also to all the provinces. Later, I shall be able to say specifically that some provinces decided to follow the Professional Fire Fighters Federation and to change their income tax act.

But before that, Mr. Speaker, I should like, for the benefit of the members of this government, to read from the speech the hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources made last year on the same motion. He said, and I quote:

Having heard the proposer of this motion and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications speak with such determination in the interests of this resolution I want to indicate on behalf of my party that we support the motion and are prepared to support the amendment in order to get it through private members' hour.

Let me put this in perspective. It is fine to have speeches in support of this very commendable motion, but I do not want to witness these speeches past six o'clock.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe in what was said by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he was in the opposition and I hope that the message has been conveyed to his government colleagues, so that they will refrain from talking out the motion past six o'clock.

● (1710)

We are in this House, Mr. Speaker, to speak on behalf of our voters and only a greater feeling of equity and justice should guide our proceedings. It is in that sense that I am humbly asking all my colleagues to consider my motion.

I would like in the first place to point the reasons specifically warranting that request for an increase with tax exemption from \$30 to \$1,000. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, volunteer firemen are ordinary workers often with a low income. They must regularly use their car to get to the scene of the fire and they must face all the dangers involved in their duties as volunteer