

# TAX TOPICS

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT YOUR REFUND

### Special credit for seniors

Many senior citizens end up paying unnecessary taxes because they are unaware of certain credits and deductions to which they may be entitled.

#### Non-refundable credits

A special age amount of \$3,482 is available for 1993 for taxpayers who were born in 1928 or earlier. Taxpayers receiving pensions (including foreign pensions taxable in Canada) or annuity payments may claim the pension income amount for up to \$1,000 of their qualifying pension income. With proper certification provided by a doctor, disabled taxpayers may claim a disability amount of \$4,233.

Medical expenses that may be claimed in order to reduce tax payable include eyeglasses, hearing aids, pacemakers, orthopedic shoes, walking aids, dentures and insulin, among many others. Medical expenses may also be claimed for a full-time attendant or for full-time care in a nursing home, but such a claim cannot be combined with a claim for the disability amount. Taxpayers can claim expenses for full-time care or the disability amount, but not both. However, expenses for a part-time attendant may be claimed as medical expenses without jeopardizing the claim to the disability amount.

Because only medical expenses in excess of 3% of net income or \$1,614 can be claimed, it is usually beneficial for the lower-income spouse to claim all the expenses incurred for both spouses. This is only true, of course, if the lower-

income spouse has sufficient tax payable to absorb the expenses.

In cases where a husband and wife have made charitable donations and the combined amounts are in excess of \$250, the donations should all be claimed on the return of one spouse or the other in order to take advantage of the higher tax credit rate of 29% for donations over \$250. It is also possible to save charitable receipts and pool donations for a period of up to five years, as donations can be claimed any time within a five-year period.

#### Deductions from income

Sometimes seniors receive income from other sources which, when combined with their pensions, may put them in a higher tax bracket. One way of reducing the income is to transfer certain amounts to an RRSP. Although the ability to make these transfers has been highly restricted in recent years, there are still some options available. Through 1994, a taxpayer may transfer up to \$6,000 of periodic payments from a registered pension plan or deferred profit sharing plan into a spousal RRSP. Eligible retiring allowances may be transferred into the taxpayer's own RRSP.

Seniors who have earned income from the year before, or unused deduction room carried forward from previous years may make RRSP contributions to their own RRSPs, if they are under 72 throughout the year, or to a spousal RRSP if the spouse is under 72 through-

out the year. All eligible RRSP contributions are deducted from income on line 208.

#### Amounts transferred from spouse

Frequently, the spouse having the lower income does not need all the available amounts to reduce his or her tax liability to zero. In these cases, the unused amounts, including the age amount, may be transferred to the other spouse. This creates a substantial tax saving by reducing the tax payable by the higher-income spouse.

Many provinces offer tax credits, tax reductions or grants to senior citizens in order to help ease their tax burden. Be sure to check the assistance available in your province.

Many senior citizens qualify to receive the goods and services tax credit. This credit can only be obtained by filling out Step 2 of the 1993 tax return. For married or common-law couples, one spouse must apply for both. Eligible seniors who did not apply for the GST credit for 1990 to 1992 may still do so. Likewise, it is not too late to apply for the federal sales tax credit for 1985 to 1990. In each case, the appropriate tax return for the year must be submitted, together with the required credit application.

Senior citizens should make sure that they take advantage of all the deductions and credits to which they are entitled. Those mentioned above are only some of the income tax provisions that could apply to senior citizens.

The implementation of any tax saving strategy is based on your personal financial situation. Professional advice should be obtained before implementing any of the suggestions contained herein.

### Self defence course offered to disabled Halton women

By WILMA BLOKHUIS  
Special to The Independent/Free Press

Disabled women are three times as likely to be physically and sexually assaulted, because they are more vulnerable and less able to defend themselves than able bodied women.

For this reason, the Halton Rape Crisis Centre (HRCC) is sponsoring a specially adapted Wen-do Women's Self-Defense Course for Women with Mobility Impairment starting April 26 and running for eight Tuesdays to June 14, 1-3:30 p.m., at Oaklands Regional Centre, 53 Bond St. at Kerr Street.

"This will be a one-time course funded by the Ontario Office for Disability Issues," explained Kathy Popaleni who is coordinating the Wen-do course for the HRCC.

"This course is designed for women with varying levels of mobility impairment, from being unsteady on their feet and having to use a cane occasionally to relying on crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, to women who have no use of their arms and legs and get around in a motorized wheelchair," explained Popaleni.

"We will build on the skills these women may already have developed to reduce their vulnerability to sexual and physical assault, anything from being mugged to physical attack."

Popaleni explained the course will cover three basic elements — awareness, avoidance techniques and action — all three areas are to be covered weekly.

"In the awareness discussions, we will encourage the women to look for places where they feel safe in their own neighborhoods, and we will also talk generally about violence against women and safety on transit systems, in the home, and on the streets."

To learn avoidance techniques, the women will practise how they will get out of dangerous situations. "They can practice yelling and screaming, and not feel embarrassed about it," said Popaleni.

As for action, self-defence techniques such as how to "breathe to calm themselves down, control their panic, and access any extra strength they may have."

Physical techniques "carefully taught and adapted to disabilities" will be taught each week, and "nobody will be asked to do something they don't feel comfortable with or don't want to do." Some of these techniques will include how to release themselves from chokes, arm grabs and body holds, and "how they can defend themselves against knife attacks and multiple attackers."

"However, no participant will be required to perform any techniques without her explicit permission."

Registration for this course, which is free, will be limited to 15 women, who will be taught by two instructors and two assistants. Attendant care will be available.

"Although the course is free, we do ask for a deposit of up to \$25 for those who can afford it, as an attendance commitment. Women who attend at least five classes will be refunded." The program is open to any physically disabled women in Halton, and to register, call Kathy Popaleni at the HRCC, 905-825-3622.

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