

## CIVILIAN SUPPORT TO THE ARMED FORCES



Photo: Canadian Legion War Services. Women on hand to meet all soldier trains. June 22, 1942 / Montreal, Quebec. National Archives of Canada/PA 108323

## INTRODUCTION

Canadians contributed in many ways to our country's great efforts in the Second World War. Not everyone who put their lives on the line to serve Canada and the world did so in a military uniform. Many individuals and civilian organizations worked closely with Allied forces during this great conflict. Their support and contributions were important in the triumph of the Allies in the war.

## CORPS OF (CIVILIAN) CANADIAN FIREFIGHTERS

Persistent German bombing of cities and factories caused great damage in Britain. Canada sought to give help and the Corps of (Civilian) Canadian Firefighters was organized in 1942 to help British firefighters combat the fires caused by the bombing.

- 422 men volunteered for the Corps. Only half of these volunteers were professional firefighters; the other half had no experience.
- The volunteer firemen received \$1.30 pay per day from the Canadian government. They received no training other than what the veteran firefighters could teach them.
- There were 11 casualties, including three deaths, in the Corps of Canadian Firefighters overseas.

## BENEVOLENT AND MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Representatives of several organizations served overseas to provide support to Canadian troops. Although their jobs were often away from the front lines, their work could often be hazardous.

- 585 volunteers from the Canadian Legion War Services Incorporated, the Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and the YMCA set up canteens and reading rooms for soldiers. Throughout their volunteer duty, they suffered 71 casualties, including eight dead.
- Medical personnel with the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Brigade also served. They acted as assistants to nurses and ambulance drivers.

## AIRCRAFT TRANSPORT

Some Canadian men and women took on the difficult and sometimes dangerous job of flying aircraft built in Canada to Britain to be used for the war effort. Overall, they suffered a casualty rate of 20%.

- These men and women served in one of three organizations: Number 45 Wing of the Royal Air Force Transport Command, Number 45 Group of the Royal Air Force Ferry Command,



or the Atlantic Ferrying Organization. Altogether, they piloted 10,000 planes overseas.

- Pilots were paid between \$500 and \$1,000 for flying the planes to Britain but, once there, they had to find their own way home.

## NEWFOUNDLAND FORESTERS

During the war, Britain was in continuous need of lumber. To provide support in this area, members of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit went to Great Britain to help.

- 3,500 experienced loggers served in Britain.
- For the most part, their duties saw them harvesting trees in northern Scotland.
- 2,100 Newfoundland Foresters also served in the British Home Guard.

## SPIES, SABOTEURS AND SECRET AGENTS

Britain enlisted a number of Canadian special operators for special duty during the Second World War. They served in Europe in France, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Italy, and in Asia in Burma, Malaysia and Sarawak (on the island of Borneo).

- Some Canadians joined the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) which organized resistance and sabotage within occupied countries.
- Others served in M.I.9, British Military Intelligence. They assisted with prisoner-of-war escapes and helped downed airmen evade enemy capture in occupied Europe.
- Some special operators trained at Camp X on Lake Ontario where they trained in such things as techniques of underwater demolition.

## THE LEGACY

The collective experiences and stories of all Canadians during the Second World War, including the civilians who worked in support of the armed forces, provides us with a proud and lasting legacy that will continue into the country's future. Remembering and reflecting on the significance of the contribution these men and women made, and continue to make, strengthens the commitment to preserve the values that they sacrificed so much for - truth, justice, peace, freedom, and knowledge. These values help define Canadians and Canada. To learn more about the role our country played in the Second World War, please visit the Veterans Affairs Canada Web site at: [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca) or call 1 877 604-8469 toll-free.

