

The Canadian Branch has its headquarters and national offices at St. John House, Ottawa, Ont., with branches in every province and local centres in hundreds of cities and towns throughout Canada. There are two distinct branches: the Association whose members train instructors, conduct classes and issue various certificates; and the Brigade, members of which are in uniform under a form of military discipline, receive constant supplementary training, and are available for call whenever the need arises. The Brigade strength is approximately 15,000 persons, about equally divided between the Ambulance Division (men) and the Nursing Division (women), and organized into about 300 divisions from coast to coast.

The primary purpose of the Association is to teach first aid and home nursing and other kindred subjects to citizens of Canada, irrespective of age, and to provide trained and organized personnel to help in time of disaster or national emergency. The work was started in 1895 and since then more than 1,000,000 persons have received certificates and other awards. Many thousands of these went to members of the Armed Forces to which trained instructors and textbooks have been provided in large numbers. The railways of Canada and many large industrial concerns maintain their own St. John centres. The training of personnel of Air Raid Precaution in First Aid was a large wartime undertaking.

The scheme of Voluntary Air Detachment Training inaugurated in 1943 provided trained personnel for overseas and, in addition, a number of members have been trained for service in Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps hospitals in Canada as well as for civilian hospitals. Hundreds of members of the Nursing Division responded to the call for nursing aides overseas and gave outstanding service in Great Britain, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Indeed, some rendered notable service in India and Burma. They worked as nurse aides, transport drivers and Headquarters staff. St. John drivers were appointed to Army Commands and special ambulance convoys in Britain while some were sent to work in Europe. They worked all hours of the day and night conveying wounded from airfields and ports to hospitals. St. John nursing members helped to offset the very serious shortage of nurses overseas; they were appointed to Emergency Medical Service Hospitals set up by the Ministry of Health in Great Britain to carry out additional hospital services arising out of the War. Others were employed in St. John Convalescent Hospitals and Red Cross Hospitals.

The return of peace saw the Order of St. John revert to its wide field of service. The Brigade performs a very special function. At port cities it assists the regular R.C.A.M.C. doctors and nurses, helps in hospitals and merchant seamen's hostels and also assists shipwrecked seamen. Uniformed St. John Brigade members are to be found at all exhibitions, large demonstrations or wherever crowds gather. Indeed, St. John First Aiders have proved their worth on the ski-runs in the Laurentians, on Mount Royal, on the Gatineau Hills, at Fort William and other places where skiing is one of the major Canadian sports.

The Order of St. John is carrying on an extensive peacetime program of home nursing, first aid and blood grouping. The training of Brigade members as blood-typing technicians was commenced in 1943. The entire personnel of large industrial firms are being typed so that, in the event of serious accident, blood transfusions may be given in the quickest possible time.