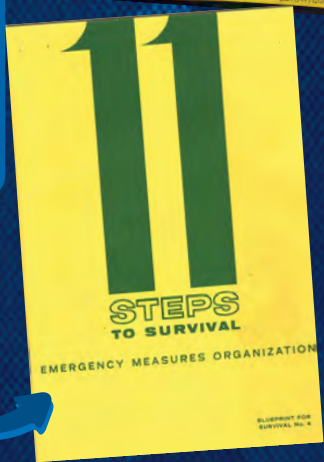


SAFE AT HOME

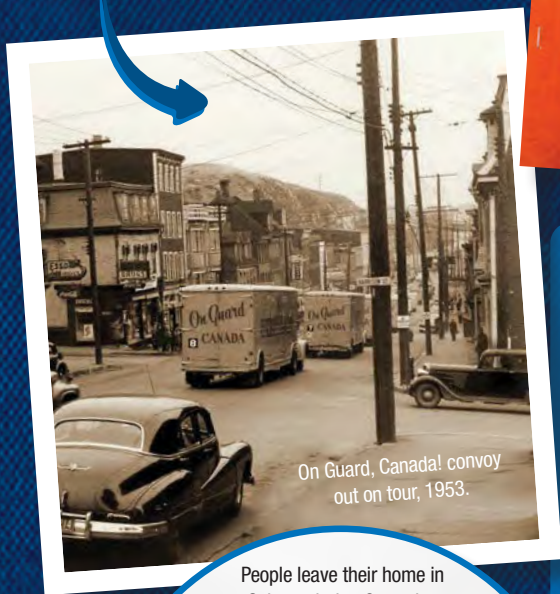
During the Cold War, the government wanted ordinary Canadians to watch for enemy activity. It also planned how to help them prepare for an attack and survive if one came. These efforts are known as civil defence.

If a nuclear missile was heading toward a big Canadian city, where would those people go? What would they eat, and who would care for those who were elderly or injured? If enemy agents spread poison in the water, what would people drink? How would food and other supplies move around the country if ports and train stations had been bombed? Would farmers be able to work their land? And how could survivors help each other and eventually rebuild their lives? All levels of government had to think about huge questions like these during the Cold War years. The federal government took the lead, setting up a coordinator and hiring people to figure out how Canada should prepare and respond. Ordinary Canadians were encouraged to volunteer to get training so they could help in an emergency. Cities were supposed to form civil defence groups using money from the provinces. The provinces said the federal government should pay. Some cities dove right in (Calgary) while others refused (Montreal). Although many Canadians got involved, most didn't show much interest and just went on with their lives.



The federal government published all kinds of booklets and information encouraging individuals and families to be responsible for their own preparations and safety.

On Guard, Canada! was a travelling educational display that went across the country in 1953. It encouraged Canadians to learn more about how they could help with civil defence.



On Guard, Canada! convoy out on tour, 1953.

People leave their home in Calgary during Operation Lifesaver, 1955.



OPERATION LIFESAVER

The process of getting people out of a dangerous place is called evacuation. On Sept. 28, 1955, government and civil defence officials ran a test evacuation in Calgary. In Operation Lifesaver, about 40,000 people were supposed to leave one area of the city for nearby towns, where volunteers would give them food and shelter. Things went pretty smoothly . . . maybe because fewer than 6,000 Calgarians actually bothered to evacuate. Organizers insisted it was a success.

On Nov. 13 and 14, 1961, the Canadian government ran a national test called Exercise Tocsin B. ("Tocsin" is an old French word for an alarm bell.) It was the biggest civil defence drill in our history, intended to test emergency plans for the military and government. The exercise was even broadcast on radio and TV.