



**SUPPLY  
LINE**

## War on Land

During the Second World War, the army was the largest of Canada's three armed services. Over the course of the war, about 750,000 men and women served in the army, across Canada and in many parts of the world.

### Rebuilding the Army

Before the war, Canada's army was small, with outdated weapons and equipment. War meant more soldiers and better equipment, but it took time to rebuild.

In 1939, men made up almost all of the army, although women could serve as nurses.

After the Canadian Women's Army Corps was created in 1941 about 25,000 women began serving in non-combatant roles.

Army units in Canada protected coastlines and other important areas. The army also set up training bases across the country.

### The Army in Britain and Europe

A significant portion of the Canadian army served overseas. Canada's first soldiers arrived in Great Britain in December 1939.

By June 1940, most of western Europe was occupied by Germany and Italy. Canadians trained for combat, while helping to defend Britain against possible German attack. Their first major engagement was on 19 August 1942, at Dieppe, France. Canadian **casualties** were heavy, with many dead, wounded, taken prisoner or missing.

The **Allies** had to choose where to land in Europe to fight Germany and Italy. They decided to invade Sicily, part of Italy. Some Canadian army units participated in Allied landings there in July 1943. This marked the beginning of ongoing operations for Canada's army. After Sicily, Canadians fought in Italy until early 1945.

Canadian army units also took part in the Allies' D-Day invasion of 6 June 1944 in Normandy, France. Canadians went on to help liberate parts of northwestern France. They also helped liberate parts of Belgium and the Netherlands (Holland).

By May 1945, when the war ended in Europe, some Canadian army units were fighting inside Germany itself.

## War with Japan

The Canadian army also fought against Japan, after that country entered the war in December 1941. Canadians had been sent to Hong Kong to help protect the British colony. Japan captured Hong Kong in December 1941, and all Canadian soldiers were either killed or taken prisoner.

For most of the Second World War, Canada's focus was on the war in Europe. After Germany surrendered, Canadians prepared to join in the fighting against Japan. Some Canadian military units were still in training when Japan surrendered, and the war was finally over.

## Aftermath

During the Second World War, nearly 23,000 members of Canada's army were killed, or died from disease or in accidents. More than 52,000 were wounded.

After 1945, more army personnel died of wartime injuries and illnesses. Many also lived with permanent psychological or physical scars.

## Vocabulary

### **Casualty:**

A military term for people who become unavailable for their duties for reasons including death, wounds, injury, illness, or other reasons.

### **Allies:**

The countries, including Canada, that joined together in opposing the Axis powers during the Second World War. The largest Allied nations were the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

# Timeline

**SEPTEMBER 1939**

Canada declares war on Germany

**MAY-JUNE 1940**

Germany overruns western Europe;  
Canada declares war on Italy

**AUGUST 1941**

Creation of the  
Canadian Women's Army Corps

**DECEMBER 1941**

Japan enters the war;  
Battle of Hong Kong

**AUGUST 1942**

Dieppe raid

**JULY 1943**

Invasion of Sicily, followed  
by the Italian Campaign

**JUNE 1944**

D-Day

**MAY 1945**

End of the war in Europe

**AUGUST 1945**

End of the war with Japan;  
End of the Second World War.