

Hundreds of Children Victims of Fire Fiends

In Ten Years, 1,448 Little Children Lost Their Lives by Fire in Canada. Also Property Loss of \$300,000,000 and 1,400 Adults Died in the Same Decade.

(By W. J. Scott, K.C., Fire Marshal of Ontario, and President Association of Canadian Fire Marshals)

Two hundred and fifty-six persons lost their lives by fire in Canada last year, and the toll for the last ten years was nearly three thousand persons.

Twenty-two million dollars' worth of property was destroyed by fire in Canada last year, and over three hundred millions was lost through this cause in ten years.

To focus public attention on this terrific loss of life and property, and to secure public co-operation in efforts to remedy this situation which approaches a national calamity, the week of October 9-15 has been set aside as Fire Prevention Week in both Canada and the United States. Led by the fire chiefs throughout the Dominion, many hundreds of municipalities will put on a special campaign during this week to clean up premises, to discover and remove specific fire hazards, and to try to educate the citizens in the common causes of fires and the ever-present threat of the fire fiend.

If every home in the city of Hamilton were either partially or wholly destroyed by fire in a single conflagration, such a catastrophe would appal not only the people of Canada but of the whole world. But such a disaster actually does occur annually in

Canada almost without notice or attention. Last year 4,000 homes in this Dominion suffered the scourge of fire, often with the loss of life, and with property damage of nearly \$8,000,000.

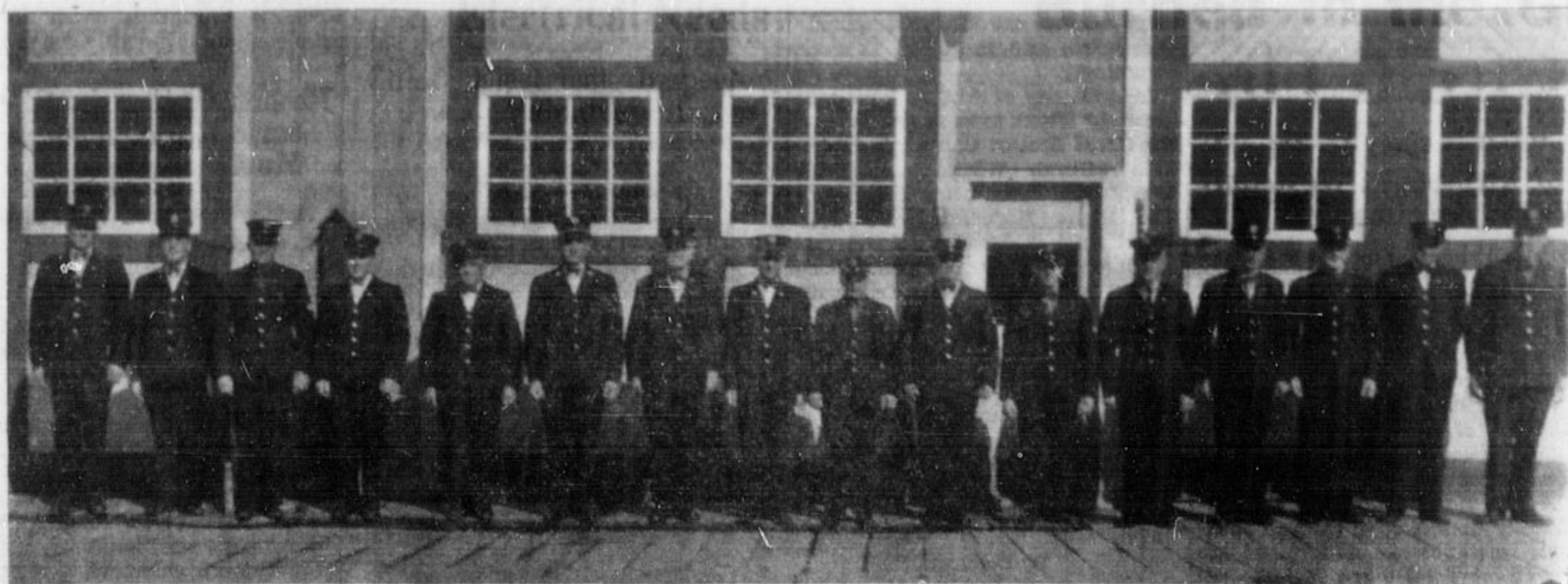
In ten years there have been 320,000 dwelling fires in Canada, with a loss of \$111,000,000.

The waste from fire is felt by every one, for this loss in the nation's wealth amounted last year to \$2.04 for every man, woman and child in the Dominion. This loss has been steadily reduced, for it was \$4.25 for the five-year period 1927-31; but there is still much to do before the Canadian fire loss is down to the level of that in Great Britain, where the per capita loss for the last five years has been only one dollar for each person.

In the same period New Zealand has reduced its loss from \$4.60 to only \$1.70, but both Canada and the United States remain up over the two-dollar mark.

Special attention to dwelling fires is being directed in this year's Fire Prevention Week campaign under the auspices of the Association of Canadian Fire Marshals, the Dominion Fire Prevention Association, and the International Committee in charge of the campaign and clean-up week in Canada and the United States. About three quarters of all fires occur in dwellings, so that here is the greatest field for

IT IS FIRE PROTECTION WEEK FOR THESE MEN EVERY WEEK



Above will be seen, at the top, the members of the permanent force of the Timmins Fire Dept. At the bottom are the same men with some of the department's equipment. Reading from left to right, top picture:—W. Boyd, W. Libarion, A. Cooper, E. McCabe, M. Daher, Deputy Chief W. Stanley, Chief Borland, Capt. J. Morton, A. Ayotte, John McKinnon, G. Pooley, P. Somers, Jos. Gratton, Omer Girard, Albert Audet, F. Culhane. Two others, F. M. Wallingford and W. Martin, are not shown, being off duty at the time. Advance Photo and Engraving

the safety efforts of both public officials and individual householders.

In this week of October 9-15 in many cities and towns throughout the Dominion fire department representatives will inspect every house in the municipality to advise and assist homeowners in making their premises more safe from fire.

Careless smokers are the greatest single cause of fires and fire loss. They started nearly 13,000 fires in Canada last year and caused a loss of \$2,500,000. To these careless smokers comes the warning not to leave burning cigarettes lying around; to be sure the cigarette stubs are extinguished; not to throw carelessly the ashes from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes; and to break their matches before tossing them away, so as to be sure they are extinguished.

Defective stoves and furnace caused nearly 5,000 fires and nearly \$2,000,000 damage last year—all the direct result of carelessness and inattention. Homeowners should also guard against defective and dirty chimneys and flues; for these caused 4,000 fires and a loss of over \$2,000,000 in Canada last year.

Electric wiring and appliances, sparks from chimneys, and the careless disposition of hot ashes and coals come next in the order of public enemies which invade the homes of Canada.

In the Province of Ontario last year three men and three women lost their lives through pouring kerosene or gasoline on fires to make them burn better, while one man and five women suffered serious injuries through this suicidal practice.

Eight little children in this province lost their lives playing with matches, and five more playing about bonfires. One man lost his life smoking in bed, and two men and one woman were severely burned from the same practice.

Last year and the year before it may have been some one else's family, home, or place of business that was destroyed by fire.

Unless the lessons of this year's Fire Prevention Week are learned and followed, not only for one week but throughout the whole year, this dread destroyer may come to your own home and cause irreparable death and loss.

Fourteen hundred and forty-eight little children lost their lives by fire in Canada in the last ten years. For the sake of the children who survive—even if the \$300,000,000 of property wasted and the 1,400 adults who suffered this terrible death are not a sufficient warning—let every week in the year be Fire Prevention Week.

Fire Prevention Association Work Aims and Accomplishments of Dominion Organization

In the annual report of the executive officer of the Dominion Fire Prevention Association there is an interesting account of the origin of the organization. It was started by a group of public-spirited citizens who, in addition to the regret felt at what appeared to be exorbitant insurance rates, were greatly concerned with the loss of life and the property loss from fires. Hon. T. W. White, then Minister of Finance, met the delegation, and a conference was arranged in the matter. It was pointed out that prevailing rates for insurance were based on costs, and that to reduce the rates it would be necessary to reduce the number and extent of the fires. The rest of the story may be left to J. Grove Smith, Dominion Fire Commissioner, who writes as follows in the report:—

The net result of the conference was the establishment of the Dominion Fire Prevention Association as a purely voluntary public service enterprise with a central office to be financially supported by the Dominion Government. Membership was confined to National and Provincial organizations and Mr. W. H. Shapley, representing the Canadian Manufacturers Association, was installed as president. In passing, I would have members note the first resolutions approved by the Association:—

- To conduct an advertising campaign similar to that of the Food Control Board during the war. Tenders were invited and the lowest cost of a two months' publicity campaign submitted was \$78,000. No further action was taken but, for the information of the present membership, I would say that the Association has received more free space in newspapers and periodicals than any similar national enterprise, that we have never spent one dollar on advertising and that in 21 years our total expenditure upon extension work has amounted to \$37,496.
- That education by means of pamphlets, lantern slides and motion pictures be introduced into public schools. This was early accomplished and in most provinces has been carried on without cessation until the present time.
- That inspection of properties be undertaken by other than insurance inspectors. This motion led eventually to the establishment of inspection bureaus in all the larger fire departments and the gradual addition of fire prevention activities to the duties of all

brigades in the Dominion.

4. That in view of the efficiency of automatic sprinkler protection, a special campaign be instituted to encourage the installation of sprinklers in all properties where life and large values are at stake. Between the years 1919 and 1926 no less than 8000 large properties in Canada were sprinklered and it is estimated that at the present time some 26,000 industrial, commercial and other occupancies in Canada have maximum safety, minimum insurance rates and the satisfaction of having contributed towards the objectives of our Association.

Further review of the early activities of the Association is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that, with three or four exceptions, the resolutions of the Association in each successive year have been carried into effect. Uniform Fire Marshal laws have been established in all provinces, the fire departments of the Dominion have been made the spear-head of our attack upon the local fire problem and throughout the nation at large a fire-consciousness has been created in the rank and file of our people.

It has already been intimated that the duty laid upon us was specifically to reduce fire insurance costs. It should also be made clear that to reduce fire waste does not necessarily imply reducing the number of fires. No progressive modern country has been able to reduce outbreaks of fire: On the contrary, fires numerically considered, increase with the social amenities of the people. Cities experience far more frequent fires than country places and Canada in this respect is more advanced than Ethiopia or Timbuctoo. With this clearly understood, the policy we have pursued of restricting the spread of fire and its consequent damage should be evident. The results as I shall now briefly enumerate them will demonstrate the logic of our approach to and prosecution of our task.

1. During the years 1919-21 the average annual fire loss in Canada was estimated at \$60,000,000; in 1922, actual statistical returns placed it at \$54,500,000. Each succeeding year has registered a decline and during the past three years the annual loss has averaged \$22,500,000. In the province of Ontario alone the loss in 1922 was \$22,100,000, in 1923 \$18,300,000, in 1924 \$16,000,000, but in the year 1927 was \$8,130,000.

2. Prior to 1922, fifty per cent. of Canada's fire loss occurred in less than one per cent. of the fires. Conflagrations wiped out cities, towns and villages. In 1921 there were 23 million-dollar fires, in 1922 there were 25, in 1923 and 1924 the number was reduced to 2, in 1925 and 1926 to one, and since 1926 Canada has experienced no million-dollar fire save the St. John Harbor fire in 1931 and the Port-Alfred Pulp fire in 1932.

What is true of conflagrations is equally true in respect to large single-property fires. The following table of fires each entailing a loss of over \$100,000, tells the story:

Years	No. of Fires	Property Loss
1922-24	329	\$85,629,000
1925-27	97	19,823,000
1932-34	49	13,341,000
1935-37	34	5,708,000

3. Much has been made of Canada's fire loss in comparison with other countries. In 1922 our loss was \$54,500,000, or \$6.20 per capita as compared with a loss of \$37,204,000 or 87 cents per capita in Great Britain. In 1937, our loss was \$22,500,000 as compared with a loss computed at \$63,480,000 in Great Britain. On the basis of inherent fire hazard Canada now has one of the lowest fire losses in the world.

4. In 1922, cities alone in Canada experienced a loss of \$16,900,000 or \$5.95 per capita. In 1937, the loss in these cities was \$6,913,000 or \$1.52 cents per capita. The fire protection, including the personnel of the brigades, is at least three times more efficient than in 1922.

similar period in their history. A stable surplus of over \$5,000,000 per annum has been the record of the past four years.

Serious Matter to Send in False Fire Alarms

Commenting on the conviction of three youths for sending in false fire alarms, the Owen Sound Daily Sun-Times in a recent editorial commented as follows: "The three before Magistrate Spereman on Wednesday afternoon faced charges laid under the municipal by-law and were fined accordingly. Had similar charges been laid under the Criminal Code, and they might easily have been, the offenders would have been liable to a penalty of two years in prison. Certainly there is a reason why the authorities look upon this business of false alarms as such a serious one. Firemen do not answer a summons in the casual manner of a motorist making his way to visit a friend; they get to the scene in the shortest possible time. They run risks, countless ones; in the course of their trip they may have accidents, other motorists may be collided with, pedestrians may be struck, firemen may be injured or killed. Any one of a number of things may happen between the time the scatterbrain joker turns in the alarm, and the time the firemen find out the ruse and return to the fire hall."

Fire Loss Report for the Quarter Ending Sept. 30

The report just received from the Ontario Fire Marshal's office shows that 4 men, 1 woman and 4 children, a total of 9, were killed in fires in Ontario in the three months just ended. In the same period there were 30 men, 3 women, and 1 child, a total of 34, injured in Ontario fires. This year already there have been 38 killed and 139 injured in fires in the province.

There have been 3,565 fires in the three months with a total loss of \$1,917,549, on which there was \$1,603,161 insurance coverage.



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