



# MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## School Route Safety

### St. John Ambulance Wants Kids to Have the Safest Possible Walk to School

**August 30, 2011 (Toronto, ON)** – With back to school fast approaching, many children are anxiously awaiting a chance to see their friends and teachers. This year your child may be walking to school alone for the first time, or the one thousandth time – either way it is a good idea to review their route with them and come up with a safety plan.

**Traffic basics.** Since they were young you've covered "look both ways before you cross the street" but it doesn't hurt to reinforce it. Make sure they stop, look and listen for traffic whenever they cross the street. Also ensure they make eye contact with drivers if they are crossing where vehicles are present, and always walk don't run across the road.

**Helmet Law.** If your child rides a bike, scooter, or skateboard to school make sure they wear a helmet – it's the law.

**Friendly Harbour.** Find family, friends or neighbours on your child's route that he/she can go to if there is a problem on the walk home. These should be adults you and your child trust and who can contact you if needed.

**Stranger Danger.** Remind your children never to accept rides or go anywhere with strangers, even if the stranger is another child or teen. If approached by a stranger, coach your children to go to the closest safe spot (a neighbour's house, store, etc), tell an adult what happened and wait for you to come get him/her.

**Stray Dogs.** It's important for children to learn how to interact safely with dogs even if they don't own one. If a dog is on leash with it's owner and your child wants to pet it, have them ask the owner for permission. Children should not approach off leash dogs. If your child comes across a stray dog on their walk have him/her find an adult and tell them about it, discourage him/her from trying to help the dog alone. If the dog is injured it may snap or attack.

**Prepare for the worst.** No matter how hard you try sometimes things just happen and it is important to give your child the skills necessary to deal with an emergency should one arise. If they know what to do, they are less likely to panic even if you aren't there. St. John Ambulance offers courses for different age groups to help children learn what to do if disaster strikes.

- **Home Alone.** For Children 7-10 years old. Focuses on safety basics such as; how to handle phone calls when parents aren't home, what to do incase of fire, when and how to use 911, an introduction to first aid, even how to make healthy snack choices.
- **What Every Babysitter Should Know.** For children 11 to 13 year old. This St. John Ambulance course provides participants with all the information they need to become a safe and reliable babysitter. With information ranging from; how to feed an infant, deal with emergencies, to what questions to ask parents before he/she takes charge. This course is excellent for children in charge of younger siblings, or aspiring entrepreneurs.

For more information, or to sign your children up for youth first aid classes, visit [www.sja.ca/on](http://www.sja.ca/on).

For over 125 years St. John Ambulance has been teaching first aid in Ontario. Today we train over 155,000 Ontarians annually in first aid and other health care related courses and remains dedicated to saving lives at work, home and play. With over 4,000 volunteers contributing over half a million hours of community service a year, St. John Ambulance is an integral part of the community offering such unique and innovative programs as; medical first response, disaster response, car seat clinics, health and safety related youth programs and therapy dog services. As a charitable, humanitarian organization, proceeds from St. John Ambulance's first aid training and first aid product sales directly support these vital community services programs. For more information on St. John Ambulance training courses and volunteer opportunities or to contact your Mississauga branch at [www.sja-mississauga.ca](http://www.sja-mississauga.ca).