

## WWI: THE WAR AT HOME

The Canadian government plays new and larger roles in Canadian's lives as a result of the WWI.

Keeping in mind our historical thinking concepts of continuity and change, consider the following question:

*How did WWI affect Canadian Society?*

Start your investigation by reading *Canadian Sources: Investigated 1914 to the Present* pages 2-3, and make notes on three key concepts regarding Canada and the war.

Key Concept 1

Key Concept 2

Key Concept 3

**For your examination of WWI and its effects on Canadian society, you will use three secondary sources to assist you: the Grade 10 Canadian History textbooks *Creating Canada*, *Spotlight Canada*, and *Canadian Sources Investigated*.**

You will research the following: RECRUITMENT and Canadian participation in the War, THE WAR MEASURES ACT, WOMEN'S ROLES in SOCIETY/the WAR, THE IMPACTS of the war on the CANADIAN ECONOMY and workers and CONSCRIPTION.

## RECRUITMENT AND CANADIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR

Read and take notes on the following secondary sources:

Creating Canada pages 176-177	Spotlight Canada pages 75-76, 108, 109	Canadian Sources Investigated pages 10, 11 (focus on white section written in paragraphs)

Examine your notes above and reflect on the CRITICAL QUESTION(S) in the box below (you may answer in point form):

What impact did the war have on existing attitudes of racism and intolerance?  
How did existing perspectives on race and nationality impact participation in the Canadian war effort?

**WAR MEASURES ACT** and DRAMATICALLY INCREASED GOVERNMENT ROLES IN CANADAIN SOCIETY

Creating Canada page 190	Spotlight Canada pages 110, 111

Examine your notes above and reflect on the CRITICAL QUESTION(S) in the box below (you may answer in point form):

Were the short term and long term impacts of the WAR MEASURES ACT positive for Canada's war effort?  
Were the short term and long term impacts of the WAR MEASURES ACT positive for Canadians and Canadian society?

Empty response box for student answers.

# WOMEN'S ROLES AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN CANADIAN SOCIETY

Creating Canada pages 191, 194, 195	Spotlight Canada Pages 108, 109 and 115-117	Canadian Sources Investigated Pages 18-19

Examine your notes above and reflect on the CRITICAL QUESTION(S) in the box below (you may answer in point form):

Did Canada's participation in WWI have a positive impact on women's roles in Canadian society?  
Did Canada's participation in WWI change women's roles in Canadian society dramatically?

THE IMPACTS of the war on the **CANADIAN ECONOMY** and workers

Spotlight Canada Pages 112, 113 and 125-127	Creating Canada Page 189 and first paragraph of p 190 (War Measures Act)

Examine your notes above and reflect on the CRITICAL QUESTION(S) in the box below (you may answer in point form):

Was the government's expanded role during the war a necessity for Canadian society to be able to meet the economic challenges presented by WWI?  
What changed in the Canadian economy as a result of the war?

## CONSCRIPTION

Creating Canada Pages 192, 193 9and 194,195)	Spotlight Canada Pages 118,119 and 121	Canadian Sources Investigated Pages 7-9

Examine your notes above and reflect on the CRITICAL QUESTION(S) in the box below (you may answer in point form):

Was conscription a sound political decision made by the Canadian government during the war?  
Was conscription necessary for Canada to fulfill its international role?

Taken from: *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation*  
Sixth edition  
2008

## Canada Joins the War Effort

The murder of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a young Serbian nationalist in June 1914 began a chain of events that led to World War I. The European powers' intricate network of alliances and agreements forced them into war. Austria attacked Serbia, an ally of Russia. Germany backed Austria, while France came to the defence of Russia. Britain, the ally of France—which in turn was allied to Russia—had promised to defend Belgium's neutrality. When Germany invaded Belgium, Britain declared war. As a member of the British empire, Canada was automatically at war.

Initially, Canadians united behind the war effort. When Borden summoned Parliament for a special war session on August 18, he told a cheering House of Commons: "As to our duty, we are all agreed, we stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain and the other British Dominions in this quarrel." Throughout the country loyal demonstrations occurred, involving impromptu parades, flag-waving, and, in the streets of Montreal, the singing of "La Marseillaise" and "Rule Britannia." Even the anti-imperialist Henri Bourassa initially supported Canadian participation, seeing the survival of France and Britain as vital to Canada. Many believed that the Allies would achieve a quick victory—by Christmas. Most English-speaking Canadians viewed the war in black-and-white terms: good versus evil; democracy versus tyranny; the Anglo-Saxons versus the "Huns." This dichotomy continued throughout the war years. Newspapers, magazines, and films would report on the war in a way that brought it "home" to the average Canadian citizen, and in such a way as to distance "us" from "them," being the enemy. Such identification was important to create a national consensus to galvanize all Canadians behind the war effort and to help them get through four painful years.

Canada prepared for war. Unanimously Parliament passed the War Measures Act in 1914, which gave the cabinet the right to suspend the civil liberties of anyone suspected of collaborating with the enemy and to regulate any area of society deemed essential for the conduct of the war. Under the act, Ottawa required all those classified as "enemy aliens"—people who held citizenship in enemy countries, mostly German and Austro-Hungarian immigrants—to carry identity cards and to report once a month to the local police or to the Royal North-West Mounted Police. Ottawa interned those who were considered dangerous, as well as anyone who refused to register. It established 24 internment camps, from Halifax to Nanaimo. In very basic camps, such as the one at Castle Mountain in Banff National Park, the internees worked for 25 cents a day for six days a week. The imprisoned labourers, mainly Ukrainians, helped to build roads, paths, and tourist sites such as the Banff golf course. Despite notification from the British Foreign Office in January 1915 that Ukrainians from Galicia and Bukovyna (the areas of the Ukraine under Austro-Hungarian rule) should be given preferential treatment as "friendly aliens," the internment of Ukrainians and some other eastern Europeans continued.

Among those interned was a Russian revolutionary who had been taken off a Norwegian ship in Halifax harbour while travelling from New York. After his release, Leon Trotsky joined V.I. Lenin in Petrograd, Russia, to lead the Bolshevik Revolution. During his one-month detainment at Amherst, Nova Scotia, in April 1917, he preached revolution to the 800 internees there. During the war, the Canadian government imprisoned about 8000 individuals. In 1918, a further order in council forbade the printing, publishing, or possession of any publication in an enemy language without a licence from the secretary of state.

## Women and the War

Women made major contributions to the war effort. Twenty-five hundred women served as nursing sisters in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, working overseas at station hospitals, on hospital ships, and on ambulance trains. Forty-three died in the service of Canada. Margaret Macdonald, director of the army nursing sisters, received the Royal Red Cross and the Florence Nightingale Medal for her effort, while Matron Ethel Ridley was invested into the Order of the British Empire for her efforts as principal matron in France.

Women also contributed millions of hours of unpaid labour to the war effort through their work for voluntary organizations, including the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE), Red Cross clubs, the Great War Veterans' Association, the Next-of-Kin Association, the YWCA, and the Women's Patriotic Leagues. They rolled bandages and knitted socks, mitts, sweaters, and scarves for the troops; raised money to send cigarettes and candy overseas; and marshalled support for the cause, not least by persuading wives and mothers to allow their men to enlist. Volunteering was a way to express patriotism to mediate fear and grief, and to demonstrate worthiness. They headed the Canadian Patriotic Fund, established in 1914 to assist families of soldiers overseas. They lobbied for mothers' pensions, day nurseries, and health inspection. By 1918, the government established federal agencies, such as the Women's Bureau and the Food Board, to assist them in the war effort. Children were encouraged to help by growing "victory gardens."

Unmarried women entered the work force in large numbers, as did some married women, to ease the wartime labour shortage. On farms, in factories, and in offices, women filled positions previously occupied by men. In summertime, the YWCA recruited hundreds of female volunteers in the cities and towns to help on farms. The Women's Canadian Club organized a Women's Emergency Corps to recruit women for the munitions-production industries. In its first year of operation, more than 35 000 Ontario and Quebec women signed up.

In wartime industries, however, gender discrimination remained: lower wages for women, lack of union support, and inadequate day-care facilities. Still, tens of thousands of women filled jobs previously closed to them, even in such male-dominated industries as railways and steel production. A number of women used their new bargaining position to raise social issues such as women's suffrage, child labour, and conditions in jails and asylums.

## Recruitment

With continuous high casualties in Europe, Ottawa stepped up its recruitment drive. In his New Year's Day address of 1916, Borden announced his "sacred promise" that Canada would send a total of 500 000 to the war front, double the current numbers. Initially, it appeared that the government could honour its commitment. In January alone, nearly 30 000 volunteers enlisted. By June 1916, the total number of wartime recruitments numbered over 300 000. Then recruitment dropped off dramatically. In summer, farmers needed young men to help on the farms. Munitions factories were in need of more workers. The government responded by establishing the National Service Board, which had a mandate to "determine whether the services of any man of military age are more valuable to the state in his present occupation than in military duties and either to permit or forbid his enlistment." The government assigned registration cards to every male of military age. It concluded that 475 000 potential recruits existed.

Borden next established the Canadian Defence Force in the spring of 1917. This force was designed to get men who opposed fighting overseas to sign up for home defence. They would replace those already in uniform who were willing to serve on the war front. This last desperate attempt to get more troops without conscription failed. In the first month of operation, fewer than 200 signed up for home defence.



## The Conscription Crisis

In the spring of 1917, Prime Minister Borden visited Canadian soldiers in British hospitals and at the front while attending a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet in London. The desperate situation and the British pressure on Canada to increase its commitment of men convinced him to break his promise at the outset of the war not to introduce conscription for overseas military service. He informed his cabinet of the decision. His French-speaking ministers warned that conscription would "kill them and the party for 25 years" in Quebec but that they would stand behind him in his decision.

The prime minister favoured a coalition government of Conservatives and Liberals as the best means to introduce compulsory service, so he approached Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Liberal Party, about the possibility. Laurier faced a major dilemma. While he agreed with the need for a coalition government for the war's duration, he opposed a union government that would introduce conscription, which neither he nor his Quebec followers favoured. "I oppose this bill," he warned when the Conservatives introduced the Military Service Act in Parliament, "because it has in it the seeds of discord and disunion, because it is an obstacle and bar to that union of heart and soul without which it is impossible to hope that this Confederation will attain the aims and ends that were had in view when Confederation was effected."

### Opposition to Conscription

The Military Service Act, the official title of the conscription bill, became law in July 1917, although recruitment did not get under way until January 1918, after the election of a coalition government. Throughout the summer of 1917, anti-conscriptionist riots broke out in Montreal. Crowds marched through the streets yelling "À bas Borden" (Down with Borden) and "Vive la révolution" (Long live the revolution). Soldiers passing through Quebec in the winter of 1917-18 were pelted with rotten vegetables, ice, and stones when they taunted French-Canadian youth for not being in uniform. More riots followed in the spring of 1918, upon the actual implementation of conscription. The most serious riot, an armed clash in Quebec City on the Easter weekend, left four French-Canadian civilians dead and ten soldiers wounded. Fortunately, the war ended a half-year later, or the violence might have escalated.

Others besides French Canadians opposed conscription. Farmers resented their sons' forced departure from the farm, where they contributed to the war effort through food production. Workers saw military conscription as the first step toward the hated compulsory industrial service, forcing them to remain at one job for the war's duration. Both groups demanded the

"conscription of wealth," heavier taxes on the rich and the nationalization of banks and industries, to ensure that financiers and businesspeople made the same sacrifice.

Some pacifist groups, such as the Quakers and the Mennonites, opposed wars as inherently evil and immoral. They upheld their beliefs despite being branded "slackers" by pro-conscriptionists. Others without a religious affiliation opposed war as a wasteful and destructive means of settling world problems. The Canadian Women's Peace Party, forerunner of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, championed peace under the leadership, ironically, of Laura Hughes, cousin of Sam Hughes, and Alice Chown, niece of S.D. Chown, superintendent of the Methodist church and an ardent supporter of the war. They advocated a non-violent struggle at home rather than war abroad as a means to reform society in order to root out the inherent causes of violence and war.

### Financing the War

At the outbreak of war, the federal government depended on revenue from the tariff and the sale of federal bonds to finance the war effort. But as imports declined and as New York replaced London as the main underwriter of Canadian bonds, the government had to look for additional money to fund the war. It sold "Victory Bonds," which proved to be immensely popular—more than 1 million Canadians purchased the bonds by war's end, generating close to \$2 million in revenue. The government also introduced another important innovation: direct taxation. First it imposed a business-profits tax; then, in 1917, it imposed its first federal income tax—3 percent for a family earning more than \$3000 or an individual earning more than \$1500. Ottawa promised that the new tax would only remain for the duration of the war. While these new sources of revenue helped, costs continued to outdistance revenue, forcing the government to borrow vast sums at home and abroad, at high interest rates. The national debt increased fivefold, from \$463 million in 1913 to \$2.46 billion by 1918.

