

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

To Volunteer or Not to Volunteer?

WORDS TO KNOW

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| prolong | obligation |
| peril | blokes |
| discord | incubation |
| dominions | imperialism |
| entail | allegiance |
| shrink | Boches |
| abide | anglicizers |
| endurance | implemented |
| conscription | imperial |
| perturbations | exemption |

If you were a young man in 1914, what would influence your decision to join, or not join, the Canadian military for overseas service? If you were a young woman, what would encourage you to volunteer, or not volunteer, as a nurse or ambulance driver for overseas service?

BEFORE READING

Support for the War

When war broke out on August 4, 1914, it received almost universal support across Canada. The Montreal newspaper *La Patrie* wrote "There are no longer French Canadians and English Canadians. Only one race now exists, united ... in a common cause."

Evidence 1.4

Posters such as these are a snapshot of the time in which they were produced.

If you were newly arrived in Canada, what would these posters suggest to you about your new country? Suppose you were a young Canadian in 1914. How would these posters affect your attitude toward volunteering?

Be the next man to put the "I" in

FIGHT
and join the



AFFILIATED WITH
M'GILL UNIVERSITY CONTINGENT
CANADIAN OFFICERS'
TRAINING CORPS

.....Headquarters.....

197 PEEL ST.
MONTREAL.

A. A. MAGEE LT. COL.

CANADIENS FRANCAIS
VENEZ AVEC NOUS DANS LE
150^{ieme} BATAILLON C.M.R.
AIDER A LA VICTOIRE DU COQ GAULOIS SUR
L'AIGLE PRUSSIE



Lt. Col. H. Barré
de la legion d'honneur

Arsenal du 65^{ieme} Ave des Pins
Salle d'exercice Rue Craig

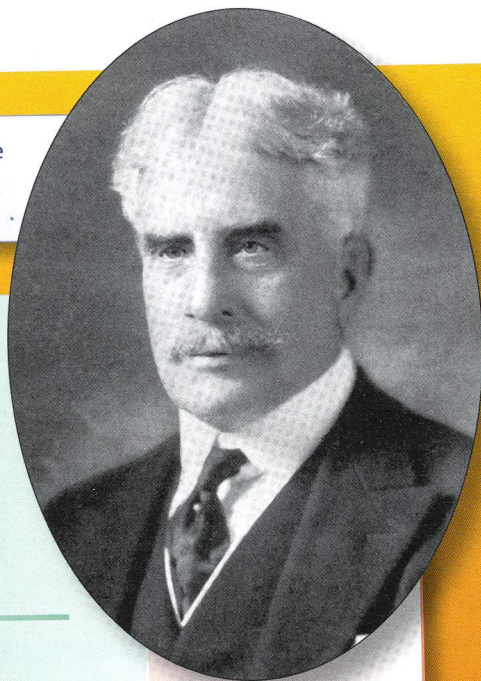
1. Prepare an organizer like the one below for the two points of view in Evidence 1.5 and 1.6.

Source	Position/role	View of why Canada is at war	View of what Canada should do to help the war and why

2. How are the two views the same? How are they different?

Evidence 1.5

Sir Robert Borden, leader of the Conservative party and prime minister of Canada.



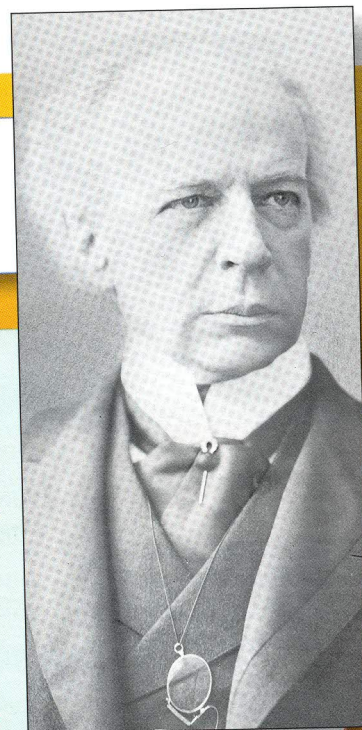
On August 19, 1914, during a debate in the House of Commons on what role Canada should play in the war, Prime Minister Borden declared his intentions.

“It is not fitting that I should prolong this debate. In the awful dawn of the greatest war the world has ever known, in the hour when peril confronts us such as this Empire has not faced for a hundred years, every vain or unnecessary word seems a discord. As to our duty, all are agreed: we stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain and the other British dominions in this quarrel. And that duty we shall not fail to fulfill as the honour of Canada demands. Not for love of battle, not for lust of conquest, not for greed of possessions, but for the cause of honour, to maintain solemn pledges, to uphold principles of liberty, to withstand forces that would convert the world into an armed camp; yea, in the very name of the peace that we sought at any cost save that of dishonour, we have entered into this war; and, while gravely conscious of the tremendous issues involved and of all the sacrifices that they may entail, we do not shrink from them, but with firm hearts we abide the event.”

- **Read the first three sentences. What does Borden think Canada should do? Why?**
- **For what reasons does Borden say Canada is not going to war? Do you agree?**
- **Refer to the last sentence. What does Borden imply when he says “of all the sacrifices that they may entail [require], we do not shrink from them”?**

Evidence 1.6

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Liberal party, former prime minister, and leader of the Opposition.



In the same debate on Canada’s role, Laurier declared his position.

“We are British subjects, and today we are face to face with the consequences which are involved in that proud fact. Long we have enjoyed the benefits of our British citizenship; today it is our duty to accept its responsibilities and its sacrifices. We have long said that when Great Britain is at war, we are at war; to-day we realize that Great Britain is at war and that Canada is at war also. ...

If my words can be heard beyond the walls of this House in the province from which I come, among the men whose blood [from] which I come, among the men whose blood flows in my own veins, I should like them to remember that, in taking their place today in the ranks of the Canadian army to fight for the cause of the allied nations, a double honour rests upon them. The very cause for which they are called upon to fight is to them doubly sacred.”

- **Read the first sentence. What does Laurier mean?**
- **Read the first paragraph. What reasons does Laurier give for his view?**
- **Read the first sentence in the second paragraph. Who are “among the men whose blood [from] which I come”? Consider where Laurier is from.**
- **Read the rest of this paragraph. What is Laurier suggesting?**

The government decided to send a military force to help the British. When the war began, this army consisted of barely 3000 men. But volunteers soon added to this number, and the army quickly grew to 30 000. Most of these volunteers had been born in Britain.

Evidence 1.7

Evidence 1.7a

“England has protected our [French Canadian] liberties and our faith. Under her flag we have found peace, and now in appreciation of what England has done you go as French Canadians to do your utmost to keep the Union Jack flying in honour.”

— Archbishop Bruchesi of Montreal, August 1914

Evidence 1.7b

The French Canadian nationalist Henri Bourassa stated that it was Canada's duty

“to contribute within the bounds of her strength and by means which are proper to herself, to the triumph, and especially to the endurance, of the combined efforts of France and England.”

— Henri Bourassa, 1914

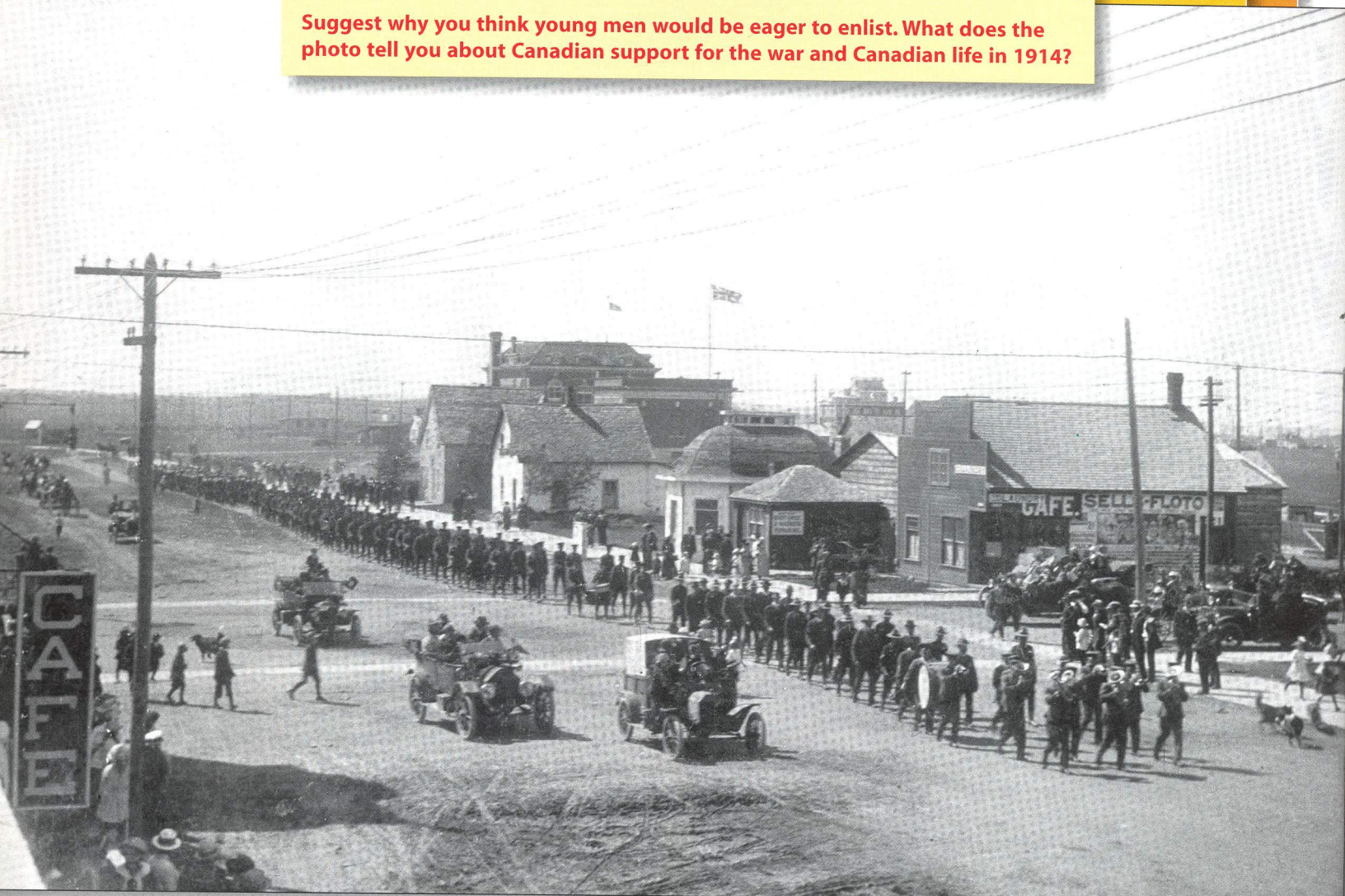
Most Canadians thought the war would be over by Christmas. No one imagined how long the war would actually last or how many Canadians would die on faraway battlefields. Nor did Canadians foresee conscription (forced service in the armed forces) for overseas service.

How do you think this knowledge would have affected support for the war had Canadians been able to see into the future?

Evidence 1.7c

Individual Canadians, too, had to decide what role they would like to play. Here, army recruits parade in Battleford, Saskatchewan in 1914.

Suggest why you think young men would be eager to enlist. What does the photo tell you about Canadian support for the war and Canadian life in 1914?



As you examine the evidence in this section, put yourself in the role of each of the people/groups discussed. What would *you* do in that particular person's/group's position and why? Use an organizer such as the one below to help track your answers.

Source	Point of view	My response and reason

Support for the War Weakens, and Conscription

By 1916, support for the war was weakening, especially in Quebec.

Evidence 1.8

Henri Bourassa, French Canadian nationalist publisher of *Le Devoir*.



In an editorial on August 2, 1916, Bourassa outlined his arguments against continuing participation in the war.

“There is among the French Canadians a larger proportion of farmers, fathers of large families, than among any other ethnic element in Canada. Above all, the French Canadians are the only group exclusively Canadian. ... They look upon the perturbations [disturbances] of Europe, even those of England or France, as foreign events. Their sympathies naturally go to France against Germany; but they do not think they have an obligation to fight for France, no more than the French of Europe would hold themselves bound to fight for Canada against the United States. ...

English Canada, not counting the blokes, contains a considerable proportion of people still in the first period of national incubation [development]. Under the sway of imperialism, a fair number have not yet decided whether their allegiance is to Canada or to the Empire, whether the United Kingdom or the Canadian Confederacy is their country.”

Evidence 1.9

“The enemies of the French language, of French civilization in Canada are not the Boches [the Germans] ... but the English-Canadian anglicizers ...”

— Henri Bourassa in 1915, referring to the Ontario government’s refusal, despite outraged calls for change from French Canadians all across Canada, to change Regulation 17. This regulation, which Ontario had implemented in 1912, limited the use of the French language in schools, even where there was a large French-speaking population.

As early as 1915, Bourassa had concluded that the war was serving Britain’s imperial interests, not Canada’s interests.

- **Read the first sentence. What does Bourassa suggest about French Canadians? How does Bourassa think French Canadians are different from other Canadians?**
- **Read further in this paragraph. What is Bourassa saying about the role of French Canadians in the war?**
- **Read the second paragraph. What is Bourassa saying about English Canada?**
- **What conclusion does Bourassa draw about Canada’s role in the war?**