

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 fulfil 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.



- Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada, declares his intentions regarding the First World War in the House of Commons on August 14th, 1914
Source: <<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/courage/sirrobertbordendeclareswar.html>>

- By October 1914, Canada had 32,000 men enlisted in the military and ready to send to the front. They had all voluntarily enlisted in the military.
- People who did not speak English, or those who did not have ties to Britain, were seen as enemies. Tensions and suspicions arose between English-speaking Canadians and immigrants from countries that were allied with the central powers (e.g., Austrians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Germans, Turks, and Bulgarians). These people became known as "enemy aliens."
- Under the War Measures Act, passed by the Canadian government in 1914, over 8000 "enemy aliens" were put into prison camps or used as forced labourers in government work projects. This went on for six years until 1920.
- By April 1917, more people were being killed in the war than were enlisting, and the war had already lasted longer than expected.

- Tension was building between French- and English-speaking Canadians at home because francophones were not enlisting in large numbers. Francophones did not feel the same attachment to Britain.
- Prime Minister Borden wanted to introduce conscription to support Canadian soldiers already overseas. French Canadians were against conscription.
- Farmers were also against conscription, because they knew Canada had to increase food production to make up for the loss of European farmland that had been destroyed by the war.
- In order to win greater support in the 1917 federal election, Prime Minister Borden obtained the cooperation of the Liberal Party, which had a large number of French-Canadian supporters.
- Prime Minister Borden also gave the right to vote to women who had relatives fighting in the war. These women tended to support conscription.
- Prime Minister Borden did not think that Britain should make all of Canada's decisions related to war and our relations with other countries, as Britain was doing at that time. Borden's actions, and the actions of Canada's military, helped Canada win more independence from Britain.

