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Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918

A Re-evaluation¹

CHRIS SHARPE

Abstract: Critical analysis of Canada's recruitment for the war effort has three main themes. The first is that the government undertook to raise an expeditionary force too large to be maintained by voluntary enlistment. As a result, conscription for overseas service had to be imposed, creating enduring rifts between regions and linguistic groups. The second is that too few Canadian-born men enlisted. The third is that the low enlistment rate among French-Canadians was a national embarrassment. This paper examines the regional patterns of enlistment, evaluates the arguments advanced to explain the French-Canadian ambivalence to the war, and concludes that conscription was necessary

EVALUATIONS OF CANADA'S military contribution to the First World War generally incorporate three themes: that voluntary enlistment fell short of the need; that Canadian-born men did not do their fair share; and that the shortcomings of the national effort

¹ The first version of this paper appeared thirty years ago. See C.A. Sharpe, "Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: A Regional Analysis," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 18 (1984), 15-29. No new data have become available since then although efforts to refine our knowledge of Great War enlistments are ongoing. For example, see Jonathan F. Vance, "Provincial Patterns of Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Military History* 17 (2008), 75-78. This paper consolidates and refines some of the data on Canada's military contribution to the War and corrects some errors of calculation. It also integrates some of the new scholarship relevant to a critical evaluation of the three themes outlined in the opening paragraph.

were largely the fault of the province of Quebec which had the lowest enlistment rate in the country. In what might be characterised as a typical, self-deprecating Canadian attitude, the never-ending debate over these questions continues to cast a shadow over the legacy of what has been described as the “Shock Army of the British Empire.”² This paper is a critical evaluation of these themes.

THE COMMITMENT

When His Majesty’s Government announced a state of war with Germany on 4 August 1914, Canada, as well as the Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland, was also at war. Until the 1931 Statute of Westminster, the autonomy of dominions extended only to internal affairs. They had no role in formulating foreign policy, no authority to declare war or make peace, and had played no part in the cascade of diplomatic exchanges which led to the catastrophe. None had been consulted before the declaration of war. All Canada reserved was the right to decide the form and size of her contribution. Hoping to demonstrate that the country was a valuable part of the empire and deserving of more recognition than she had hitherto been awarded, the government placed great significance on battlefield successes.³ The most iconic was Vimy Ridge, where the Canadian Corps achieved a tactical victory which had eluded all previous attackers.⁴ The emergence of Canada as a nation is still frequently tied to this event. Speaking at the Vimy Memorial in 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said “every nation has a creation story to tell. The First World War and Vimy are central to the story of our country.”⁵

The immediate Canadian response to the declaration of war was enthusiastic. The size of the initial rush of recruits can be explained

² Shane B. Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).

³ Jeffrey A. Keshen, “The Great War Soldiers as Nation-Builders in Canada and Australia,” 3–26, in *Canada and the Great War*, Briton C. Busch, ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 20.

⁴ Terry Copp, “The Military Effort, 1914–1918,” 35–61, in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, David MacKenzie, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 51.

⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008), 68.

in part by the widespread belief that the fighting would be over by Christmas.⁶ It also reflected the high levels of unemployment in urban-based manufacturing industry, and the prospect of poor harvests, especially in the Prairies. By the end of 1914 almost 60,000 men and women had offered themselves for service in the newly-created Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). Although more than seventy percent of these men were British-born the fact that native-born Canadians were initially unenthusiastic about fighting for king and empire was not an issue in 1914. But it was soon to become a source of national concern.⁷

With the benefit of hindsight, the story of Canada's commitment to the war effort might be called 'two divisions too many'. The political and cultural problems which followed the imposition of conscription in 1917, and the century-long anguish over whether Canadians made an adequate military contribution to the war effort might never had occurred if the government had not made what many have argued was a hasty and ill-advised decision about the size of the expeditionary force that it was prepared to send overseas. War planning is an inexact science and in the fall of 1914 no Canadian politician or soldier could realistically have predicted that the war would last more than four years, and cost almost 67,000 Canadian lives. But if Prime Minister Robert Borden had been less concerned with his efforts to expand Canada's role in imperial affairs, and more inclined to listen to the advice he was given by his military advisors, the Canadian war effort might not have been extended beyond the country's ability to maintain it on a voluntary basis.

Two days after war was declared the Cabinet authorised the creation of an active service force. On 8 August Sir George Perley, acting Canadian high commissioner in London (and soon to become the minister of overseas forces of Canada), advised Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden that Lord Kitchener, British minister of war, was

⁶ The hope and, indeed, expectation that the war would be short was shared by more than just the first groups of eager recruits. European civilian and military leaders expected, and had planned for a short, decisive war, knowing that a conflict prolonged by the increasing advantages of defenders, would raise the spectre of defeat and inevitable social upheaval. See Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013), 334.

⁷ Ronald G. Haycock, *Sam Hughes: The Public Career or a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1986), 202.

very grateful for the “splendid offer” of Canadian troops, and “hopes you can send him full division of twenty to twenty-five thousand. Says he can use all you think best to send.”⁸ Although the authorised strength of the force was set at 25,000 on 10 August, Kitchener got more than that. On 3 October a thirty-ship convoy departed for England carrying 31,200 Canadian soldiers—the largest military force that had ever crossed the Atlantic as a unit.⁹

The authorised strength of the CEF was doubled to 50,000 on 7 November. At this point Major-General Gwatkin, the sensible old British soldier who was chief of the Canadian General Staff, told Prime Minister Borden that maintaining a field force of this size was the maximum contribution the country ought to undertake, since nobody knew how long the war might last and the required ratio of enlistments to men at the front would be at least three to one.¹⁰ Perley warned Borden that Canada should not commit to providing more divisions than she could reinforce and suggested that two full divisions with reserves, totaling twelve to fifteen thousand men, was likely the practical limit. Borden also heard from the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence Colonel Eugene Fiset who advised “having regard to what war wastage means, it would be better to concentrate effort on the raising and training of reinforcements than to go on adding to the number of units at the front.”¹¹ All this sage advice was ignored.

At the end of May 1915 the War Office, taken aback by the number of casualties sustained during the German spring offensive, announced that His Majesty’s Government would “accept with deep gratitude an

⁸ C.P. Stacey, *Historical Documents of Canada. Volume V. The Arts of War and Peace. 1914–1945* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), 550.

⁹ G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914–1918* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1962), 29. Nicholson claims the number of men in the convoy was approximately 6,000 more than had been promised, or who had been planned for. But at a meeting at Valcartier on 21 September, attended by Borden and other members of the Cabinet, it was decided that all effective men would be sent overseas, so that no accepted volunteers would be left behind. Nic Clarke suggests even this number under-estimates the number of volunteers who came forward, since 3,050 men were rejected as medically unfit and about 2,000 more for other reasons. Nic Clarke, “‘You will not be going to this war’: The rejected volunteers of the First Contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force,” *First War Studies* 1, (2010), 163.

¹⁰ J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 22.

¹¹ Quoted In C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies Volume I: 1867–1921* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 178.

even larger army than already provided or contemplated.”¹² Ignoring the practical considerations, Borden raised the authorised strength to 150,000 on 8 July.

Then, during the summer of 1915, the prime minister visited England and France. Here he became aware for the first time of the scale of the war and its enormous hunger for men. Upon his return to Canada the strength of the CEF was raised to 250,000. Then, on 30 December during a meeting with the ministers of militia and defence, finance, and customs, he proposed that the authorised strength of the force should be increased to 500,000. They agreed, and apparently, with no more consultation than that, Borden told the nation of this decision in his New Year’s message, reflecting his firm commitment to a vague aspiration, based on his unshakable belief that Canada’s non-existent influence over British war policy could be increased by a larger military contribution.¹³

The resulting Order-in-Council of 12 January 1917 authorised the minister of militia and defence to “raise, equip *and send overseas* (emphasis supplied) ... officers and men not exceeding 500,000.” This was a huge undertaking for a country of only eight million. With the benefit of hindsight we can ask the questions that should have been asked at the time. How many of the approximately one-and-a-half million men of military age in Canada were fit? Would one-third of them volunteer?¹⁴ Minister of Finance Sir Thomas White was later to reflect, “none of us had any clear idea as to how so many additional men could be raised or where the necessary men would come from. ... We simply went on faith, feeling instinctively that means could be found to carry it out.”¹⁵ Means *were* found, but they left a bitter legacy because before the year was out, conscription for overseas service had been imposed.

To most Canadian historians, the wording of the order is clear. The intent was not to enlist that number of men, but to create and maintain an overseas force of a half-million men, some of whom would

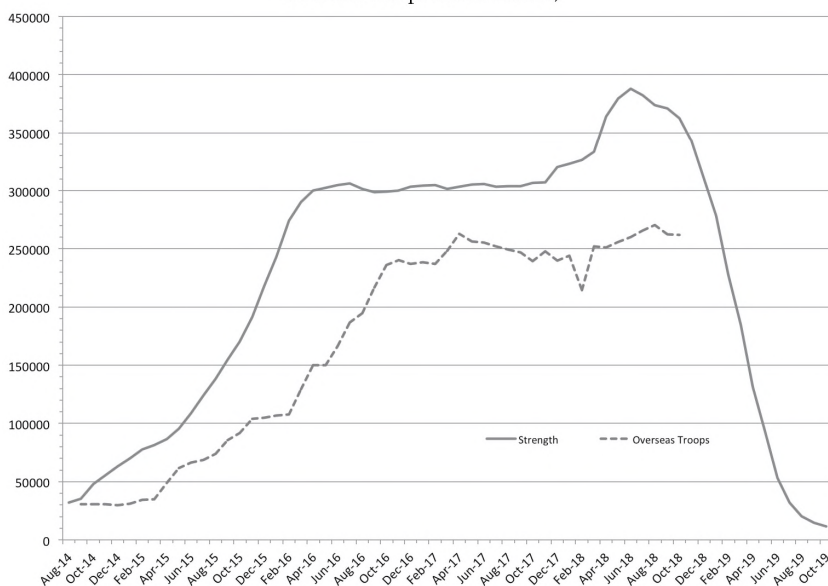
¹² Ibid., 177.

¹³ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, Fifth Edn. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2007), 135.

¹⁵ Quoted in Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden, A Biography, Volume II: 1914-1937* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975), 34.

Figure 1: Strength of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada
(excluding Railway and Forestry Troops, troops attached to Imperial Forces and
Overseas troops not in France)



Source: Report of the Director of the Operation of the Military Service Act, *Sessional Paper* 246, 1919.

serve in Canada.¹⁶ Given the contemporary estimate that monthly casualties and ‘wastage’ would be five percent of strength, an estimate which turned out to be woefully inadequate, maintaining a force of a half-million would require the annual enlistment of 300,000 additional men. This number could not possibly be obtained under a voluntary system. The number of enlistments in the CEF, including conscripts, is generally accepted as 619,636, but the peak strength of the CEF did not exceed 388,000–118,000 at home and 270,000 overseas (Figure 1).¹⁷

¹⁶ See Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 215; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*; Robert Craig Brown and Donald Loveridge, “Unrequited Faith: Recruiting the CEF 1914–1918,” *Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire* 51, (1984), 53–79; and Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*.

¹⁷ The reported number of enlistments is based on an analysis of the attestation papers by Col. A.F. Duguid and his staff in the 1930s. In his discussion of the potential sources of error in the analysis, Morton notes that “at least 21,097 men admitted to having served earlier in the CEF” and were, therefore, double-counted. It is important, then, to distinguish between the number of enlistments in the CEF and the number of individual men and women who enlisted. Desmond Morton, *When Your Number’s Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), 277.

The question “is Canada doing its share?” became a major preoccupation as early as the summer of 1917. Critics said that to equal Australia’s contribution Canada should have had a half-million men overseas by the beginning of the year; to equal New Zealand’s, 450,000; and more than 400,000 to equal South Africa’s. But Canada had only 284,000 officers and men in England and France.¹⁸ The government had authorised an armed force of 500,000 but had not guaranteed that level would be reached. But nice round numbers announced by politicians have a tendency to take on a life of their own. Public opinion considered this one to be cast in stone, and the government’s failure to “redeem the pledge“ was widely criticised.¹⁹

The situation may not be as clear-cut, or as uncomplimentary to Canada as is often suggested. Australia raised six infantry and one mounted division and also contributed men to a joint New Zealand-Australian division. The men in these units represented about thirty-nine percent of the total number of eighteen to forty-five-year-old men. The comparable number for Canada is about forty-eight percent. Data in the *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire* are limited to ‘white males’, and in the Canadian case to men born in Canada or Britain. On this basis the overseas Canadian contingent represented 29.5 percent of the age-eligible men; the Australian, 30.1 percent. Total enlistment represented 32.2 percent of the eligible Canadian men; 30.8 percent of the Australian. Playing with such numbers is a fool’s game, but there is evidence that the Australian comparison is not as invidious as often suggested.²⁰

Canadian tradition has been to raise an army of paid volunteers when required, rather than maintain a large standing army. In 1914 Canada had a regular army of only 3,110 men, supported by about 74,000 members of the militia, an “exceedingly urban and English”

¹⁸ C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies, Volume I: 1867-1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 68.

¹⁹ Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 217. Pressure on the government was increased by comparisons with the seemingly greater efforts of other members of the empire. Britain raised seventy-five infantry and eight cavalry divisions to Canada’s five so that in terms of divisions relative to population size, the British efforts was about three times that of Canada’s. See Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 178.

²⁰ Australia provided 400,000 men out of a total population of 5 million. Canada provided about 620,000 men (and women) out of a total population of about 7.5 million. The armed forces of both countries, then, amounted to 8 percent of their total populations. By this token, Canada did not fall short of its expected contribution, although the myth that Australia made a larger contribution than Canada persists.

force that was in many cases little more than an excuse to dispense social and political patronage.²¹ Many of the men did not even undergo the annual minimum twelve days of training.²² The raising of a ‘hostilities only’ army, entirely in keeping with Canadian tradition dating back to the first Militia Bill in 1868, was based on the belief, firmly held by Minister of Militia Sam Hughes, that the best soldiers were citizens fighting to defend their homes.²³ In the Canadian case the myth seemed reinforced by the fact that from the summer of 1917 onwards the Canadian Corps was commanded by Sir Arthur Currie, a real estate salesman from Victoria, British Columbia who had started his military career as a militia gunner.²⁴

The *Act Respecting the Militia and Defence of Canada* (1904) required that:

All the male inhabitants of Canada, of the age 18 years and upwards, and under 60, not exempt or disqualified by law, and being British subjects, shall be liable to service in the Militia: provided that the Governor General may require all the male inhabitants of Canada, capable of bearing arms, to serve in the case of a *levée en masse*.

²¹ John Swettenham, ed. *Valiant Men: Canada's Victoria Cross and George Cross Winners* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), viii.

²² Curtis Mainville, “Committing to War: Compulsory Service and the Limitations of Canadian Mobilization, 1914–1918,” Unpublished paper, Department of History, University of Ottawa, no date, 2.

²³ Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 12.

²⁴ James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896–1921* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 5. Canada had in place a mobilisation plan for an overseas contingent, prepared in secret by British and Canadian staff officers during 1911, in case “one day the Dominion government might decide to mobilise for active service for overseas a Canadian contingent, consisting of a division and a mounted brigade.” It aimed to create a regionally and ‘racially’ balanced force of unmarried volunteers aged between twenty and thirty-five, based on the existing militia organisation, with “its war outfit adapted to meet the requirements of active service in a civilized country in a temperate climate.” However Colonel Sam Hughes, minister of militia and defence, ignored this plan and replaced it with a scheme of his own devising which was characterised as ‘chaotic’ even at the time. This strange episode in Canadian military history is well-discussed elsewhere. See A.F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938); Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914–1918*; Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*; and James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896–1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

However, the decision to create an overseas expeditionary force faced significant legal difficulties. Section 69 of the Act was very clear: “The Governor in Council may place the Militia, or any part thereof, on active service anywhere in Canada, and also beyond Canada, for the defence thereof, at any time when it appears advisable so to do by reason of emergency.” Could men fighting in France or Belgium be reasonably considered to be defending Canada? And what status would they have? The Militia Order of 17 August 1914, issued on the authority of the War Office, declared that the CEF would be imperial, and have the status of British regular troops. The term ‘imperial’ was used to designate troops raised by direct order of the king beyond the limits of the United Kingdom and India, commanded by British officers and maintained by an annual vote of the British Parliament.²⁵ But the CEF was to be raised and paid for by the Canadian government, and the men considered part of a volunteer militia which had been deployed overseas to defend their country. Was this legal? It was an unprecedented situation, requiring a clever solution.²⁶ Until 11 August 1914, volunteering was restricted to members of the Non-Permanent Active Militia or the Permanent Force. Thereafter there were no restrictions, but any man not belonging to one of these organisations was first enrolled in a militia unit. Militiamen were then assigned to a newly-created CEF battalion for overseas service. ‘Attestation’ as the process was known, required the recruit to declare a willingness to serve under the Army Act “for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services or until legally discharged” and “taking a personal oath of allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, his heirs and successors.”²⁷

²⁵ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*, Vol. II, appendix 8.

²⁶ George F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 313.

²⁷ David W. Love, “A Call to Arms”: *The Organization and Administration of Canada's Military in World War One* (Winnipeg: Bunker to Bunker Books, 1999), 63.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ENLISTMENT IN CANADA

The CEF included three components: the men who enlisted voluntarily, those who were conscripted under the Military Service Act of 1917, and the Nursing Sisters, all of whom were volunteers. Where did they come from?

Assessing the regional pattern of enlistments requires an appropriate baseline population. Some discussions of regional enlistment patterns simply use the number of males aged eighteen to forty-five (1,726,873) from the Census of 1911 (Appendix: Table I).²⁸ Brown and Loveridge use 1,888,825, the number of such men reported in the *Canada Year Book 1913*.²⁹ Stacey used 7,993,000, the estimates of total 1916 population from the 1938 *Canada Year Book*.³⁰ All these numbers, especially Stacey's, are too large because they include men who were ineligible for military service. Only British subjects were eligible.³¹ The Militia Act provided that men up to the age of sixty could be called, but the normal limit was forty-five. All Canadian- and British-born men were eligible, but nearly 190,000 of the foreign-born were not because they were still un-naturalised aliens (Table II). Arriving at an estimate of the number of men eligible for recruitment requires that they be subtracted from the total. This cannot be done precisely, but the number used here is the best possible approximation of the size of the pool of eligible men. The 1911 census gives the number of foreign-born males aged twenty-one and over and still classed as aliens. The number of ineligible foreign-born males was estimated by multiplying the number of all foreign-born males by the proportion of foreign-born males over the age of twenty-one and still alien, and subtracting this number from the total. The effect of this admittedly crude adjustment, which eliminates 189,701 men, is negligible in eastern Canada, but significant in the Prairies. The pool of eligible men is reduced by twelve percent in Manitoba, eighteen percent in Saskatchewan, twenty-four percent in Alberta and thirty-two percent

²⁸ Note that the tables for this article can be found in an Appendix located at the end of the article.

²⁹ Brown and Loveridge, "Unrequited Faith," 73.

³⁰ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 225.

³¹ The status of 'Canadian Citizen' was created under the *Citizenship Act* of 1910, and the period of domicile required of foreign-born people who wished to become citizens increased from three to five years. However, Canadian citizenship as a category separate from 'British subject' did not exist until the *Canadian Citizenship Act* came into force on 1 January, 1947.



Recruiting soldiers in front of city hall. Toronto, Ontario, 13 March 1916. [Library and Archives Canada PA 072627]

in British Columbia. Tables I and II show the provincial distribution of men aged eighteen to forty-five and Table VI the estimated number of eligible men. Almost sixty percent of them lived in Ontario and Quebec.

The CEF Attestation Paper asked “In what Town, Township or Parish and in what Country were you born?” Data on the specific place of birth of all men and women in the CEF was therefore recorded, but has almost never been used as the basis for further calculation. Furthermore, most discussions of enlistment patterns use data based on the place of enlistment, rather than place of birth. Comparing the two provides differing perspectives on the composition of the CEF (Table IV). As one would expect, the number of CEF members born in the Prairie provinces is low. One had to be born in 1900 or earlier to meet the minimum age requirement for enlistment, and this part of the country was not heavily populated prior to the turn of the century. The relatively large number of men who signed their attestation papers in one of these provinces indicates the volume of westward settlement which had occurred by 1914.

Several factors have been proposed to explain the regional patterns of enlistment. Stacey suggests that what he called the “evident high degree of indifference to the war” in Saskatchewan might be the fact that

110,279 (twenty-two percent) of its residents had German or Austro-Hungarian ancestry.³² Just over sixteen percent of the total population of the three Prairie provinces were of German or Austro-Hungarian origin but there is no way of knowing how far back it might be in the past.³³ Forty-two percent of those with German and Austro-Hungarian backgrounds were Canadian-born, and they represented only about thirteen percent of the total Canadian-born prairie population.³⁴ In any case, sixty-three percent of the Saskatchewan male population aged eighteen to forty-five was either Canadian- or British-born, only ten percent less than the level in Manitoba (73.0) which had a much higher rate of enlistment (1911 *Census of Canada*, Table x). It is unclear, then, the extent to which the level of German and/or Austro-Hungarian ancestry affected enlistment rates.

Enlistment rates were generally lower in provinces with large rural populations. There are two possible explanations. One is the reluctance of farmers to enlist, or to allow their sons to enlist, because they believed that increasing food production was a more important contribution to the war effort than they would provide by enlisting. That this was important is recognised by the fact that in 1917 they were originally exempted from conscription. The second is that the army provided an alternative to the urban jobs that had disappeared during the pre-war depression—leading to higher enlistment rates in urban areas.³⁵

The argument that rural areas tended to produce fewer recruits, while it is true for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan, is not as relevant for Quebec. There was a common perception that Quebec was a primarily rural province. While 51.6 percent of its population did live in rural areas, this was only slightly more than the 47.4 percent in Ontario and considerably less than the percentages in Manitoba (56 percent), Saskatchewan (73.3) and Alberta (62.1).³⁶ The percent of Quebec's population living in urban areas (48 percent) was second only to Ontario (52.6 percent) and above the Canadian average of 45.5 percent (Table IV).

³² Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 236.

³³ Joseph Boudreau, "Western Canada's 'Enemy Aliens' in World War One," *Alberta Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1964).

³⁴ *Canada Year Book 1918*, 106.

³⁵ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1914: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 262.1

³⁶ *Census of Canada 1911*, vol. I, Table X, 530.

Between 1871 and 1914 the Census defined an "urban place" as any incorporated community, regardless of size. Since then, a population threshold of 1,000 has been applied. Table v is based on that definition. Table VI indicates that neither the level of urbanisation in 1911 nor the increase in urbanisation between 1901 and 1911 was significantly correlated with enlistment rates. The correlations do suggest that Canadian-born males were less likely to live in more urbanised provinces, and for the opposite to be the case for British-born men (Table v). The significant negative correlation between the increase in urban population between 1901 and 1911 and the proportion of Canadian-born eligible males is interesting, as is the positive correlation with the proportion of British-born males. This suggests that the rapid urban growth over this decade, which was most noticeable in the Prairie provinces, was the result of either immigration or inter-provincial migration.

Difficult economic conditions also influenced rates of enlistment. The initial rush of volunteers was partly a response to high levels of unemployment among waged labour in the industrial heartland. By the summer of 1915, concern over unemployment was so serious that the government began to discuss the feasibility of sending unemployed munitions workers to Britain where jobs were available.³⁷ Drought in the Prairies reduced farm income in 1914 at a time when railway construction had slowed to a crawl.³⁸ Then the outbreak of war led to an immediate cutback in public works spending by all levels of government, causing severe unemployment in the urban construction industry.

The war brought few economic benefits to Canada. It has been argued that the country would have been richer in both the long and short term if the war had not happened.³⁹ The Shell Committee, and then its successor, the Imperial Munitions Board (IMB), let significant contracts for the production of ships and munitions, but the benefits were understandably concentrated in areas of the country that already had the necessary manufacturing capability. The IMB let munitions and ship-building contracts worth \$1,104 million to a total of 718 firms. There was a huge range in the size of the individual contracts,

³⁷ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 34.

³⁸ John Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

³⁹ Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Life and Business Ties of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., 1888-1939* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1978), 318.

but fifty-nine percent of the firms which got contracts were in Ontario and twenty-five percent in Quebec. In terms of the total value of contracts, Ontario received forty-six percent and Quebec, twenty-nine percent. In the Prairie provinces only twenty-nine firms received contracts worth about \$7 million, less than one percent of the total.⁴⁰ The fact that some regions enjoyed new wartime employment to help offset the effects of the pre-war depression, and others did not, may well have had a negative influence on rates of enlistment. Increasing demands for industrial workers, and the concomitant rise of wages led to increasing competition for labour. The conflict between military manpower policy and industrial policy surfaced as early as the spring of 1916.⁴¹

Canadian enlistment rates can be considered:

a general index of attitudes: of the degree of commitment of some regions to the war, and of others' relative indifference or hostility. The statistics of response to the greatest international crisis Canada had ever confronted seem also to have some general significance as reflecting the isolationist predilections of some regions, and the existence in others of important ties of mind and heart with parts of the outside world. The dominating feature is, of course, the low figures for the province of Quebec which document most dramatically the traditional isolationism of French Canada.⁴²

Was the war in Europe greatest international crisis Canada had ever faced? The different possible answers to this question may help to explain the undoubtedly low enlistment rate in Quebec (Table vi). The complaint that Quebec did not 'do its share' in terms of contributing men to the CEF was made as early as 1916 and has remained a contentious issue ever since. Efforts have been made to explain and justify the situation, but it remains unresolved and the history of the period continues to challenge comfortable assumptions,

⁴⁰ F.C. Hirsch, "Statement of Orders Placed by the Imperial Munitions Board in Canada, as to Provinces, also the United States," 25 January 1919; "List of Firms From Whom the Imperial Munitions Board Purchased Materials," 21 February 1919, *F.C. Hirsch Papers*, Library and Archives Canada, MG 30, B4: Vol. 36.

⁴¹ Brown and Loveridge, "Unrequited Faith," 66.

⁴² Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 236.

as it should in a mature country.⁴³ It was a sensitive issue for Sir Wilfrid Laurier who predicted in January 1917 that:

If it be said that Quebec did not come forward in the same number as the English provinces, I have reason to believe than when the figures are analyzed, the margin of difference between the native-born populations of Quebec and the native-born population of the other provinces will not be very wide.⁴⁴

Others have since argued that if British immigrants are removed from the calculations, the respective contribution of French- and English-Canadians were more proportional than the raw data suggest.⁴⁵ Unfortunately any attempt to prove the point is made impossible by the lack of disaggregated data giving the specific place of birth of the eligible, Canadian-born population. However, one document in the Public Archives of Canada which shows place-of-birth data leads to the conclusion that while twenty-three percent of CEF enlistments took place in Quebec, only eleven percent were Quebec-born. On the other hand, the province had 24.5 percent of the country's eligible male population (Table VI) and twenty-one percent of the Canadian-born members of the CEF enlisted there (Table III). From one perspective then, men living in Quebec enlisted in the CEF in almost the same proportion they made up of the pool of eligible men. But Ontario, with thirty-five percent of the eligible men, provided forty-eight percent of the Canadian-born recruits.

Given the long-lasting debate about the adequacy of Quebec's, or French-Canada's contribution to the CEF, it is unfortunate that the Attestation Paper did not record the mother tongue of recruits.⁴⁶ The table in the official history of the CEF showing the language of men in the First Contingent is of dubious quality since a footnote explains that "French Canadians are credited with the full strength of French-Canadian units, and all men bearing French names and born in

⁴³ MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, 75.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Terry Copp, *The Canadian Response to War: 1914-1917* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1971), 39.

⁴⁵ Serge Durflinger, "French Canada and Recruitment during the First World War," (1998) available at warmuseum.ca/education/on-educational-resources/dispatches/french-canada-and-recruitment-during-the-first-world-war/

⁴⁶ Whether this was a deliberate move by Hughes is matter of conjecture. See Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 213.

Canada are called French-Canadians.⁴⁷ The first criterion would count bilingual Anglophones or other non-Francophones assigned to one of the nominally French-Canadian battalions, and the second would ignore men whose families might have an English surname because of a long-ago ancestor but which had been francophone for generations. Militia Department statistics indicate that by 30 April, 14,100 French-speaking soldiers had enlisted, although less than half were recruited in Quebec.⁴⁸ The origin of these statistics is unknown.

The debate is also complicated by the fact that most sources do not differentiate between Quebec and French Canada. Then, as now, there were pockets of francophone Canadians outside the boundaries of Quebec. One was the Donnelly-Falher region of the Peace River district in northern Alberta which attracted a number of young men from Quebec when it was opened for settlement just prior to the war. Fifty-five young men from this area ended up in military service. Only one was Anglophone. Seven were of French origin. Five of them went home to join the French Army, the others joined the CEF. Two men joined the American Army. The Anglophone man and seven others were volunteers. The remaining forty-two were conscripted and two of them were killed. Most of these men were Quebec-born, and were presumably recorded as such during attestation. However, since most sources consider the place of enlistment, rather than the place of birth, the entry of these men into the CEF inflated the Alberta total, reduced the Quebec one, and contributed no information about the number of Francophones in the CEF. But we know this only because the author of a rarely-cited article came from this region.⁴⁹ A similar situation may have occurred in New Brunswick where five of the seven battalions raised contained large numbers of Acadian recruits.⁵⁰ It is impossible to guess how many times a similar situation occurred in other regions of the country, but it has been argued that French-Canadians outside Quebec enlisted in about the same proportion as their English-speaking *confrères*.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*, appendix 86.

⁴⁸ J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2003), 25.

⁴⁹ Jean Pariseau, "La participation des Canadiens français à l'effort des deux guerres mondiales: démarche de réinterprétation," *Canadian Defence Quarterly/Revue Canadienne de Défense* 13, no. 2 (1983), 43-48.

⁵⁰ Brown and Loveridge, "Unrequited Faith," 71, footnote 36.

⁵¹ Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 212.

On 30 April 1917 the Minister of Militia, Sir Edward Kemp, told the House of Commons that 14,100 French-Canadian men had proceeded overseas. He was asked how the government determined this number and whether it had taken into consideration that some men with English or Scottish surnames were actually French-speaking? Kemp did not reply.⁵² In a statement to the House of Commons on March 1918 the prime minister said there were 16,268 Canadians of French descent in the army but provided no source for the number.⁵³ In an oft-quoted letter written on 30 December 1935, the deputy minister of national defence said “there is not, nor ever can be, any precise, accurate or authentic statement as to the number of French Canadians who served in the Canadian forces in the World War 1914–1919.”⁵⁴ However Armstrong, quoting Canadian sources within British headquarters, estimated that approximately 15,000 French-Canadians served in France, about 10,000 of them in combatant battalions.⁵⁵ And, in an appendix based on Kemp’s statement, she estimated the total number of French-Canadians in the CEF at between 32,000 and 35,000, which would represent roughly six percent of its total strength. Pariseau suggests “if the French-Canadians provided only 12.6 percent of the total effectives, that would become 24.5 percent if applied only to the Canadian-born troops,” which he says numbered 318,705.⁵⁶ This hypothesis would suggest about 78,000 French-speaking recruits, a number which has not been suggested elsewhere. An article in *La Presse* on 14 December 1916 suggested that 42,000 of the 150,000 men who had enlisted in Ontario were native-born. If true, then the comparable number from Quebec would be about 25,000. Another author argues, without evidence, that “if our good neighbours in Ontario enlisted above all in auxiliary and rear-echelon units, this is exactly the opposite of the case of the French-Canadians ... who enlisted above

⁵² *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1917, 2627.

⁵³ *Debates of the House of Commons*, 1918, 936.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Elizabeth Armstrong, *The Crisis of Quebec 1914–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵⁶ Pariseau, “La participation des Canadiens français à l’effort des deux guerres mondiales,” 45.

all as combatants.⁵⁷ None of these attempts to redress the balance are supported by statistics.

Marriage also affected enlistment. While the values are not statistically significant, the correlations between the percentage of eligible men who were married and both voluntary and total enlistment rates are negative (Table v). Marriage rates were higher among young French-Canadian men than those living elsewhere (Table VII). Sixty percent of the men aged twenty to forty-five in Quebec were married; the highest level in Canada. When five-year age groups are considered, Quebec had the highest proportion of married men in every group but one. Twenty-one percent of the British Columbia men aged twenty to twenty-four were married, slightly more than the 20.1 percent in Quebec. This factor cannot be ignored, at least in the early days of the war. The infamous mobilisation telegram sent on 14 August 1914 by Hughes to all officers commanding militia divisions and districts stipulated that ‘no married man will be authorised to proceed to Valcartier without the written consent of his wife.’ This requirement remained in place until 13 August 1915.⁵⁸

Is it necessary to try and argue that the contribution of French-Canadians was comparable to the level recorded in other parts of the country given that married and employed men were also under-represented? A better question might be: how many ‘Quebecers’ would have had to enlist to make the controversy go away? If the answer is: enough to have made conscription unnecessary, this would place on Quebec the entire onus of a problem that was pervasive across the country—the declining success of voluntary enlistment from 1917 onwards.

Morton argues that men with deep ancestral roots in Canada were the least likely to enlist.⁵⁹ Not all Canadians viewed their European heritage—assuming they had one—in the same way. Many Francophones had a concept of Canada quite different from their Anglophone neighbours. Ignoring this ignores the importance of some

⁵⁷ Jacques Michel, *La Participation des Canadiens Français à la Grande Guerre. Réponse à un livre récent de M. André Siegfried: ‘Le Canada, puissance internationale’* (Montreal: Editions de L’A.C.-F., 1938), 21.

⁵⁸ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*, 26.

⁵⁹ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada from Champlain to the Gulf War*, Third Edn. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 152.

issues that were considered vitally important by French Canada but easily dismissed by English-speaking Canadians.⁶⁰

While people might have been prepared to accept that every step in the crisis that led to the outbreak of war was a logical response to the one before in orthodox military and diplomatic terms, they did not necessarily accept this as a good reason for eight million people to die.⁶¹ Armstrong argued that understanding the Quebec response to the war requires distinguishing between two kinds of nationalism: active and passive. The latter refers to a people prepared to defend their country only when it was actually threatened. The war demonstrated that there were two widely-held conceptions of the country: one that believed Canada should help shape Europe's destiny and the other convinced that as a small North American nation she should cope with her own internal problems.⁶² Unfortunately the difference of opinion, and the responses it generated, led to the situation where, for the first time since Confederation, many Francophones came to view Quebec as their only true political homeland.

Understanding the French-Canadian response also requires an appreciation of the importance of the relationship between language and schooling. Many critics, Armstrong in particular, fail to give to the Ontario school question the importance it deserves although "no incident did more to colour the attitudes of Quebec and Ontario towards one another than the struggle over Regulation XVII, formulated by the Ontario Department of Education in 1912."⁶³ During the late nineteenth century there was a significant spill-over of people from Quebec into eastern and northern Ontario, and by 1910, Franco-Ontarians constituted about ten percent of the provincial population. Regulation XVII effectively prohibited the use of French as a language of instruction beyond the first two years of school and was widely interpreted as yet another facet of an ongoing campaign led by two normally irreconcilable groups. Irish settlers in general,

⁶⁰ Carl Berger, "Introduction," in Ramsay Cook, Craig Brown, and Carl Berger, eds., *Conscription 1917* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), vii-x.

⁶¹ Gwynne Dyer and Tina Viljoen, *The Defence of Canada: In the Arms of the Empire, Volume I* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 208.

⁶² Joseph Levitt, "Introduction to the Carleton Library Edition," in *The Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918*, by Elizabeth H. Armstrong, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), xi.

⁶³ Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1966), 35.

and Ontario Orangemen in particular were united in their opposition to Franco-Ontarians: the Orangemen because they were Catholics, the Irish because they spoke French. They knew it was impossible to force adults to forget their native language, but wanted to ensure that children were prevented from learning it. The restriction on the teaching of French was particularly offensive because there was no equivalent restriction on German, which was a language of instruction in a number of schools in and around Pembroke and Kitchener. When the Ontario regulation is considered alongside the restrictions on French-language instruction imposed in the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, and the long-standing debate about French-language education in Manitoba, which ended in its abolition in 1916, it is easy to understand how francophone Canadians would feel that ‘the tyranny of the democratic majority’ had emphasised individual over group rights.⁶⁴ It confirmed their long-standing belief that only in Quebec did people believe that Canada was a partnership between two ‘founding’ peoples, the French and the English.⁶⁵ For many French-Canadians, this national-scale issue became a principal preoccupation. They saw that the first line of defence of what they considered inalienable rights was not in Flanders, but in the schools of Ontario, and French-Canadian nationalists were convinced that this was just the most recent episode in a 250 year humiliation of the innocent, benevolent and tolerant French-Canadian at the hands of the villainous English.⁶⁶ It is particularly unfortunate that the dispute was at its most bitter in 1916, during one of the most crucial stages of the war, and it undoubtedly affected the debate over conscription in 1917.⁶⁷

Many British-born men enlisted in the CEF. Whether this was to defend Great Britain, the empire, or Canada is irrelevant. Why was a similar commitment to a ‘mother country’ not felt by Canadian Francophones? French-Canadians had no reason to feel an attachment to Britain, which even after a century-and-a-half, was still considered the conqueror. There was no longer a need to rely on Britain for defence against the Americans, so loyalty to Britain could easily be considered a one-sided obligation. But what about

⁶⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁵ Levitt, “Introduction,” xviii.

⁶⁶ Gérard Filteau, *Le Québec, le Canada et la Guerre 1914-1918* (Montreal: Les Éditions de L’Aurore), 1977, 21. MacMillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History*, 71.

⁶⁷ Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question*, 37.

France, which was more gravely affected by the war than Britain? The answer may be that there was no sentimental tie to France strong enough to warrant dying for her.⁶⁸ More than a century of neglect and separation had broken any remaining bonds of intimacy.⁶⁹ For many French-Canadians, their mother country was Canada, not Britain or France.⁷⁰

Finally, it should be remembered that in 1914 the CEF was an English-speaking institution. All the instruction manuals were in English and most officers, including those of the 22nd, were English-speaking. Only unilingual Francophones were accepted into the battalions earmarked for Canadiens; bilingual Francophones were generally assigned to English-speaking battalions.⁷¹ At a time when many in Quebec were unilingual, this posed an insurmountable problem. At the beginning of the war, Perley suggested to the prime minister that a French-Canadian battalion be raised as a matter of priority since he “personally doubted the wisdom of doing anything to accentuate different races as all are Canadian.”⁷² Not everyone was as perceptive. Hughes most certainly was not. Among the 36,000

⁶⁸ Dyer and Viljoen, *The Defence of Canada*, 252.

⁶⁹ Filteau, *Le Québec, le Canada et la Guerre 1914-1918*, 20.

⁷⁰ Serge Durlinger, “Face to Face on Conscription,” *Legion Magazine*, Retrieved 28 April 2014, available at Legionmagazine.com/en/2014/03/face-to-face-on-conscription. J. Castell Hopkins provides a sympathetically critical contemporary assessment of the situation: “The two million people of French origin in Quebec or scattered in other provinces of Canada looked upon their race as the pioneer settlers, as the founders of the nation, as the most devoted sons of the soil. They were much more detached from their old-time Motherland than were English, Scotch or Irish Canadians; no common ties of language, education and religious sympathy held them to Canadian national unity. They were detached from the other provinces of Canada ... by a different language and, upon the whole, a different religion. ... It should often have been remembered that the French Canadian was isolated by his faith and language from the rest of Canada; that he was separated by various traditions and interpretations of history from the ideals of the English Canadian; that he was severed by a gulf from the anti-Church, republican, socialistic France of 1914, no matter how devoted he might be to the French language and his records of French heroism; that he did not understand, and few of his leaders had faithfully interpreted to him, the Empire ideals of other provinces; that, practically, he knew no country but Canada as embodied in his native province and often was frankly indifferent to the fate of other nations or indeed provinces.” J.C. Hopkins, *Canada at War: A Record of Heroism and Achievement* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1919), 267-269.

⁷¹ Filteau, *Le Québec, le Canada et la Guerre 1914-1918*, 73.

⁷² Quoted in Desmond Morton, “French Canada and War, 1868-1917: The Military Background to the Conscription Crisis of 1917,” 84-103, in J.L. Granatstein and R.D. Cuff, eds., *War and Society in North America* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson, 1971), 84.

men who came to Valcartier, 1,245 claimed to be of French origin—slightly over half of them already members of French-speaking militia units. While this would have been just enough men to form a complete battalion, this first, critical opportunity was forsaken—perhaps not surprisingly given that Hughes was a dedicated Orangeman who would hardly have cared that, for the first time in the country’s history, a military force was being organised without adequate French-Canadian representation. So the French-Canadian militiamen of the Carabiniers Mont-Royal, the Chasseurs Canadiens, the Voltigeurs de Quebec and the Carabiniers de Sherbrooke were allocated to two English-speaking battalions; the 12th, along with men from New Brunswick and PEI and the 14th, along with men from two Anglophone units from Montreal.⁷³ By the time the First Canadian Division had completed its training in England and was ready to move to the front line, French-Canadian representation was limited to a single company of the 14th battalion, one forty-eighth of the division’s infantry.⁷⁴

A later suggestion that a four-battalion French-Canadian brigade be created was also ignored. Twelve French-language battalions were authorised during the war; four percent of the 275 battalions raised for overseas service. They can be identified by their cap badges which bear the words ‘Battalion Canadien-Français d’Outre-Mer’. Ten were raised in Quebec (although one also recruited in Ottawa), one in eastern Ontario (230th Voltigeurs Canadien-Français), and one in Western Canada (233ième Nord-Ouest).⁷⁵ Only one, the 22nd, recruited to strength and fought as a unit. All the others were broken up to provide reinforcements, primarily for the 22nd, but also for Anglophone units.⁷⁶ By the summer of 1916 one Francophone battalion was in France, two in England, one training in Nova Scotia, one on garrison duty in Bermuda, and one in Quebec City, providing reinforcements for overseas. The rest were at Valcartier, characterised

⁷³ Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 213.

⁷⁴ Morton, “French Canada and War,” 96.

⁷⁵ John F. Meek, *Over the Top! The Canadian Infantry in the First World War* (Stittsville, Ontario: Private Printing, 1971). Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces, Volume I, 1763–1969: The Fear of a Parallel Army* (Ottawa: Directorate of History, Department of National Defence, 1988), 79.

⁷⁶ Pierre Vennat, *Les ‘Poilus’ Québécois de 1914–1918: Histoire des militaires canadiens-français de la Première Guerre mondiale* (Boucherville: Méridien, 1999), 12.

as barely existing as military units, undisciplined, weak in numbers and plagued by bad officers and desertion.⁷⁷

In his 1919 report to Parliament the director of the Military Service Act laid the blame for the below-average commitment of Quebec's young men at the feet of the province's teachers and leaders:

In justice to the average citizen of Quebec it is only fair to point out that all the evidence which has reached this Branch, including many police reports and results of investigations, have shown conclusively that whatever defiance to the law has been encountered in that province was caused, not so much by any premeditated and well-thought-out intent to default on the part of the common people, as by the evil teachings or influences to which they were unfortunately subject. It is inconceivable that a people of such splendid personal morality as the French-Canadians should fail to take proper issue when a question of international morality was gripping the entire world, if the campaign of education as to the real issues of the war had been generally supported by the educated or popular leaders of that province.⁷⁸

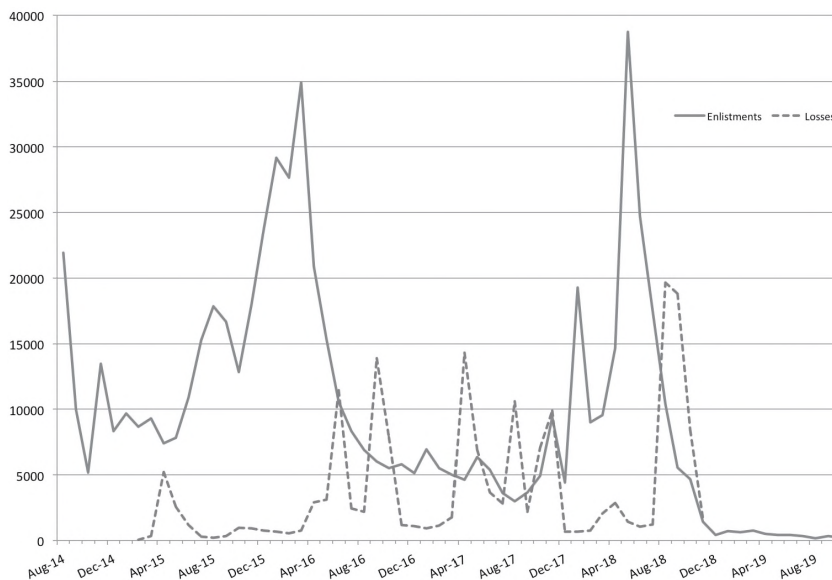
THE FAILURE OF VOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT AND CONSCRIPTION

By August 1916, all forty-eight battalions of the first four divisions of the Canadian Corps were in France. To this point voluntary recruitment had provided sufficient reserves to maintain the strength of the corps. Then the successful attack against Vimy Ridge on Easter Sunday 1917 exposed the weakness of the recruiting system and confirmed the validity of the concerns expressed two years earlier by Gwatkin, Perley and Fiset. Taking the ridge cost the corps 10,602 casualties in less than a week. Total casualties for the month amounted to 23,939, but only 4,761 men volunteered. The flow of new recruits had now slackened to the point that it was impossible

⁷⁷ Morton, "French Canada and War," 100.

⁷⁸ *Report of the Director on the Operation of the Military Service Act (1919)*, Sessional paper 246, (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1919).

Figure 11: Male Enlistments and Appointments, and Casualties
Canadian Expeditionary Force, August 1914–May 1920



to provide sufficient reinforcements (Figure 11).⁷⁹ The enlistment rate in the spring of 1917 was so low that it would take four months to replace one normal month's losses.⁸⁰ Keeping the corps at its current strength would require 75,000 new recruits per year.

The CEF as a whole was not short of men. There were still about 10,000 men in England and another 60,000 in Canada. The government had decided in the fall of 1915 that in addition to the approximately 12,000 men of the militia who were on active service, 50,000 men of the CEF were to be kept in Canada for training and home defence duties.⁸¹ However the plans for 1919, which was

⁷⁹ The enlistment data in this table are based on Appendix C of Nicholson (1962: 546). They correct what must be a typographical error in Nicholson's table, which gives a total of 24,506 'other rank' enlistments for October, 1918—an impossible number. Removing 20,000 from this number brings the total enlistments to 619,636, the generally-agreed number. This typographical error has, unfortunately, found its way into some subsequent work (e.g. Mainville, n.d., 21).

⁸⁰ A.M. Willms, "Conscription 1917: A brief for the defence," *Canadian Historical Review* XXXVII, no. 4, (1956), 432.

⁸¹ J.L. Granatstein, "Conscription in the Great War," in David MacKenzie, ed., *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, 63–75, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 66.

expected to be the year of the great final push, called for 120,000 reinforcements over and above the current demand, and even putting all the attested men into action would have been insufficient to meet the need. The government faced some hard choices.

The prime minister's position on compulsory service was well-known. In December 1914 he told an audience in Halifax that "under the laws of Canada, our citizens may be called out to defend our own territory, but cannot be required to go beyond the seas except for the defence of Canada itself. There has not been, there will not be, compulsion or conscription."⁸² The minister of militia understood this too. During the special session of Parliament on 22 August 1914, Hughes was asked whether, if additional Canadian troops were to be dispatched to the front, the system of volunteering would be continued. He replied: "so far as my own personal views are concerned, I am absolutely opposed to anything that is not voluntary in every sense, and I do not read in the law that I have any authority to ask Parliament to allow troops other than volunteers to leave the country."⁸³ Prime Minister Borden reiterated his position in the House of Commons in January 1916, saying: "in speaking in the first two or three months of this war I made it clear to the people of Canada that we do not propose conscription. I repeat that announcement today with emphasis."⁸⁴ He was undoubtedly sincere on both occasions. However, in the face of insufficient voluntary enlistment, he now faced three choices: reduce the size of each Canadian division by removing one brigade (i.e. four battalions); disband one or more of the four combat-hardened divisions and re-allocate the men to other units; or introduce selective conscription.

Currie refused to give in to British pressure to reduce the size of his divisions.⁸⁵ The twelve-battalion, three-brigade Canadian division was considerably larger than the comparable British unit. When 100 men were added to each battalion in early 1918, after the 5th Division was broken up and its 21,000 men sent to reinforce existing units, each of the four original divisions had 1,200 more men in the line than a British one, and all the Canadian units operated at full

⁸² Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 35.

⁸³ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War*, appendix 58.

⁸⁴ *House of Commons Debates*, 17 January 1916, 26.

⁸⁵ Tim Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (Toronto: Allen Lane Canada, 2010), 233.

strength during the last months of the war. Because they could fight with two battalions up and two in reserve, follow-up attacks by a Canadian division had fifty percent more men than a British one, as well as more artillery, machine guns and engineers. All these factors contributed to the tremendous success enjoyed by the corps during The Hundred Days that ended the war.

Currie's obstinate defense of the structure of the corps, and the fact that the option of reducing the overall size of the CEF was never seriously considered by the government, reduced Borden's choices from three to one. Convinced of the need for reinforcements to support the efforts of the men overseas, and buoyed by a groundswell of public support for conscription as a way of equalizing the sacrifice, the prime minister announced on 18 May 1917 that conscription would be imposed as permitted by the Militia Act.⁸⁶ This decision was not without precedent. Australia had twice rejected conscription for overseas service in October 1916, but both New Zealand and Britain had imposed it, although it is interesting that Britain did not extend it to Ireland, where participation in an imperial war was as unpopular as it was in Quebec.

The Military Service Act (MSA) was signed into law on 29 August 1917. Twenty English-speaking members of the Liberal opposition deserted Laurier to vote for it; nine French-speaking Members of Parliament voted against. Only five francophone Members of Parliament voted for the bill: two cabinet ministers, one Member of Parliament from each of Saskatchewan and New Brunswick and the former deputy speaker of the House. The passage of this legislation has been characterised as one of the great tragedies of Canadian history because the Great War, which could have been for Canada what it was for other dominions, a powerful nation-building force but which was actually divisive in its effects upon the relations between English and French.⁸⁷ War can be a shared experience which transforms a people into a nation, but Canada became a country of two nations. Which is why Robert Fulford argues that the Great War should be considered as "the unmaking of Canada as much

⁸⁶ Stacey, *Historical Documents of Canada*, 573.

⁸⁷ C.P. Stacey, "Nationality: The experience of Canada," *Canadian Historical Association Report 1967*, (1967), 12.

as the making.”⁸⁸ To most Quebecers, conscription represented the ruthless determination of English-Canadians to order young French-Canadian men to die for an exclusively English-Canadian cause.⁸⁹ To many in English-speaking Canada it was a way to wreak vengeance on Quebecers who, by their blunt opposition to conscription, had demonstrated that they were either disloyal, or cowards, or both.⁹⁰

On 13 October 1917, all men of Class I (unmarried men or widowers aged twenty to twenty-four years) were ordered to report “for the defence and security of Canada, the preservation of our Empire and of human liberty.” The MSA defined all male British subjects between the ages of eighteen and forty-five as eligible for military service, and stipulated that if and when a certain defined class of men was called up, all its members would immediately be considered soldiers. Prior to reporting they were deemed to have been on leave of absence without pay.⁹¹ Any man seeking exemption had to make a written appeal to the local tribunal. From a military point of view, the greatest weakness of the Act was the liberality and vagueness of the allowed exemptions. A man could be exempted if he had an essential occupation or if his work required special qualifications; if serious hardship would result from his absence on military service; if he was a conscientious objector, Mennonite, Doukhobor or clergyman; if he was an honourably discharged veteran; or suffered from an obvious physical disability. Section 11 (1) (d) was particularly generous: “that serious hardship would ensue, if the man were placed on active service, owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations, or domestic position.”⁹²

Virtually all the Class I men (93.7 percent) immediately applied for an exemption from military service. While the requests came from all walks of life, and all parts of the country, perhaps the most resolute opposition came from rural Canada where it was feared that conscription would accelerate the trend to rural depopulation that had picked up speed since the war began—not only as a voluntary response to calls for enlistment in the CEF, but also because of the

⁸⁸ Morton, “French Canada and War,” 85. Robert Fulford, “The Great War and the Unmaking of Canada,” *National Post*, 8 February 2000, B1.

⁸⁹ Dyer and Viljoen, *The Defence of Canada*, 292.

⁹⁰ Morton, “French Canada and War,” 102. Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question*, 37.

⁹¹ Hopkins, *Canada at War*, 91.

⁹² Stacey, *Historical Documents of Canada*, 572.

lure of increasingly well-paid jobs in the industrial cities.⁹³ By the end of the year 404,395 men had reported but 380,510 had sought exemption, leaving only about 24,000 who were willing to serve from the outset. In Ontario, 118,000 of 125,000 sought exemption; in Quebec, 115,000 of 117,000. Most exemptions were granted. Of those seeking exemption, 278,779 were granted by the end of 1917. Another 53,788 cases remained to be heard, and 67,122 appeals had been made against the initial tribunal decisions, many by military authorities.⁹⁴ Misconceptions, misinformation, and confusion contributed to the widespread animosity against the MSA and Quebec. According to the central appeal judge (a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada) there was a common belief in Quebec that Francophones were given blanket exemptions while conscription was imposed on Anglophones with “unparalleled vigour.”⁹⁵

There were many reasons for the almost universal filing of claims for exemption. The euphoria which greeted the outbreak of war less than three years previously had disappeared as the casualty lists lengthened, and the men still at home began to realise just how awful the war really was. It was different than any war in which Canadians had previously fought. It was the first war in which more soldiers perished by enemy fire than by disease because of the hugely increased exposure of soldiers to acute danger.⁹⁶ Except in very specific circumstances such as siege warfare, soldiers had rarely been placed in life-threatening situations for prolonged periods. But the long range and enhanced lethality of First World War artillery, the development of new weapons, especially the machine gun, combined with the static deadlock of trench warfare, meant that soldiers had to cope with high levels of stress and danger for long periods of time.⁹⁷ Nor was it lost on the men remaining in Canada that recruits were desperately being sought just when they were most likely to be killed.⁹⁸

The goal of the MSA, to enlist 100,000 young, unmarried men, was eventually achieved (Table VIII). The final report of the director

⁹³ W.R. Young, “Conscription, rural depopulation and the farmers of Ontario,” *Canadian Historical Review* 53, (1972).

⁹⁴ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 85–87.

⁹⁵ Granatstein and Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars*, 119.

⁹⁶ Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire*, ii

⁹⁷ Gary Sheffield, *The First World War in 100 Objects: The story of the Great War told through the objects that shaped it* (London: Sevenoaks, 2013), 46.

⁹⁸ Mainville, “Committing to War,” 10.



Edmonton's recruiting scene ca. 1914-15. [Library and Archives Canada PA 013071]

of the Military Service Branch indicated that 113,461 men were made available to the military authorities although a return to Parliament by the Militia Department in 1919 revealed that 124,588 men had been 'taken on strength' (Table VIII). Subtracting the 24,933 on leave for compassionate or farming-related duties, and subsequently discharged, and 16,300 struck off strength as liable only for non-combat duties "or of a category that ought not to have been order to report" leaving 83,355 men actually enlisted. This number has since been accepted as accurate although it understates the number of men made available.⁹⁹

The inconclusive debate about the wisdom of, necessity for, and practical consequences of conscription has been going on since 1917. For many years there was a general consensus that conscription was a pointless tragedy because it split the country, destroyed the unity of both the Conservative and Liberal parties, and did not provide enough additional men to have any significant effect on the outcome of the war.¹⁰⁰ But almost a quarter-century later, one of the authors of the standard work on Canadian conscription had an epiphany when he came to understand the fundamental fact that men in understrength

⁹⁹ C.P. Stacey, *The Military Problems of Canada: A survey of defense policies and strategic conditions past and present* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1940), 79.

¹⁰⁰ Berger, "Introduction," viii; Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 99.

units were at much greater risk than those in full-strength ones.¹⁰¹ The basic tactical unit was the battalion, with a nominal strength of approximately 1,000 men. It could lose much of that strength in the course of an afternoon. For example, in the three days between 15 and 18 September 1916, the 22nd Battalion lost a third of its men in the battle for Courcellette. Two weeks later it lost another third at Regina Trench. Even if casualties on this scale could be replaced, and this was exceptionally difficult in the case of a French-Canadian battalion, it would almost certainly be with inexperienced men whose initial contribution to the fighting capabilities of the unit would be minimal.

A reduction in firepower dramatically increases the stress on the remaining effectives, especially since understrength battalions were all-too-often assigned the same tasks as full-strength ones. Thus the need for reinforcements was based on much more than a nebulous feeling that Canada had to 'do its bit'. As noted previously, enlistments were running at about 4,000 per month in the spring of 1917. Not all of those who enlisted were interested in serving in the infantry and furthermore, getting new recruits to France was becoming increasingly difficult as the entry of the United States into the war put huge strains on an already inadequate supply of shipping. No Allied leader, political or military, could have predicted that 1918 would be "the year of unexpected victory."¹⁰² Nor could they have imagined the scale of the casualties that Canadian forces would suffer during the last few months of the war. During the 'Hundred Days' between the opening of the Battle of Amiens on 8 August and the Armistice, the corps suffered 45,835 casualties, the highest Canadian casualty rate in its history.¹⁰³ This amounted to nearly twenty percent of the total number of CEF casualties during the entire war. Conscripts provided the great bulk of the corps' reinforcements during this critical period. The 24,132 men who reached the front lines by the time of the Armistice provided more reinforcements than the 5th Division did when it was broken up—and they arrived just in time to let the corps achieve its greatest successes of the war. Had the war continued into 1919, as everybody expected, the conscripts would have been sufficient to keep the corps up to strength for most of the year.

¹⁰¹ Granatstein, "Conscription in the Great War."

¹⁰² Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 217.

¹⁰³ Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire*, 5.

Their presence in the line, no matter how poorly-trained they may have been, undoubtedly helped to reduce the overall number of casualties.

WHERE WERE ALL THE 'REAL' CANADIANS?

The largest army raised in Canada prior to 1914 contained less than 10,000 men. In spite of the daunting organisational and logistic challenges, and the lack of a precedent, this “unmilitary country” was able to raise an expeditionary force of almost 620,000 men and women.¹⁰⁴ It is ironic that this force, which stood firm in the face of the world’s first poison gas attack at Ypres in 1915, which was responsible for the iconic victory at Vimy Ridge in 1917, and which played a leading role during the last hundred days of the war, should be characterised as a national failure because not enough native-born Canadians joined its ranks. Given the contemporary preoccupation with this issue, it is not surprising that “an entire literature has been devoted to denying, justifying, or explaining the reluctance of the Canadian-born to enlist for overseas service.”¹⁰⁵ There is never a single, simple explanation for any national-scale phenomenon, but it has been suggested that the nature of pre-war Canadian military culture may be part of it. The generation born and raised in Canada prior to 1914 generally accepted the idea of military service to defend the homeland. But it would have required a personal stake in the outcome of a European conflict before they would consider it a war worth dying in and there were many who, quite legitimately, couldn’t make the connection between a war on the French-German-Belgian border and the security of Canada.

By the time the First Contingent sailed from Quebec in October 1914, questions were already being raised about what was perceived to be the small number of Canadian-born men in it. This seems a strange concern, given that all non-aboriginal people in Canada were either immigrants, or the children of immigrants. The critics also failed to make any distinction between recently-arrived, British-born immigrants, and those who had been brought to Canada as children. However the fact that a volunteer’s place of birth was

¹⁰⁴ George F.G. Stanley, *Canada’s Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974).

¹⁰⁵ Wood, *Militia Myths*, 223.

considered important from the very beginning of the war indicates that Canadians believed that the distinction mattered. As the war dragged on, service at the front was increasingly viewed as a sacred duty by a large segment of the Canadian population, especially by non-combatants. But this conviction was not universally shared. For the significant minority who were unmoved by the clarion call of nationalism and patriotic duty—farmers and industrial workers, both English- and French-speaking—home defence might well be a duty of citizenship but overseas service was a matter of conscience. To them, the imposition of conscription for overseas service was a betrayal of the long-standing Canadian principle that the militia could be made subject to a *levée en masse* only for home defence.¹⁰⁶ The MSA ignored this long-standing tradition. Matters were made worse on 19 April 1918 when all exemptions were cancelled and the draft age lowered from twenty to nineteen. The groups whose disaffection from national life would become a defining national characteristic—the farmers, workers, French Canadians, the Prairie West and Maritimers—were all united in their outrage over these decisions.

The perceived failure of the Canadian-born to ‘do their duty’ may be rooted in a conflation of the myths of the ‘citizen-soldier’ and the alleged superiority of the rugged Canadian lumberjack, farmer, or fisherman over the effete subjects of autocratic militaristic European nations. Canadian imperialists were fond of emphasizing the northern qualities of the country, and arguing that a rough and demanding climate produced a people characterised by energy, strength, self-reliance, health, and purity.¹⁰⁷ Lathe operators and office workers may have been vital to the nation’s economic survival, but they could

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁰⁷ Keshen, “The Great War Soldiers as nation-Builders in Canada and Australia,” 4–8. Keshen notes that a similar mythology was created in Australia. The prototype there was the bushman or digger (i.e. miner or prospector) with roots in the Outback, who was tough, taciturn, and capable of improvisation as well as loyal to his mates. They could, consequently, be described to the Australian public as “physically powerful, exceptionally brave, independent-minded, and democratically-inclined.” As in Canada, however, this was not the background of most Australian males in general, or soldiers in particular. The unromantic fact was that most had experienced an urban or suburban upbringing and were in no way connected to the outback. However, eighty-two percent of them were Australian-born. Morton, *When Your Number’s Up*, 314. Morton quotes Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger: The Australian Soldier in Two World Wars* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985).

hardly serve as national icons.¹⁰⁸ The British readily seized the image of Canadians as robust, free-spirited pioneers notwithstanding that the inspiring image of the rugged Canadian as the backbone of the country's army had no basis in fact.¹⁰⁹

Of the men who fought at Vimy, 6.5 percent were farmers or ranchers, 18.5 percent were clerical workers, and 64.8 percent were manual workers. By war's end, with the help of the MSA, farmers, fishermen, hunters, and lumbermen comprised 22.4 percent of the CEF, industrial workers 36.4 percent. Morton notes that even the white collar workers (126,387) outnumbered the 123,060 farmers, but this is misleading and unfair since he has included 15,023 students in the former number.¹¹⁰

More than sixty percent of the men in the First Contingent were British-born (Table x). Less than one third of the 'other ranks' were Canadian-born, although just over seventy percent of the officers were.¹¹¹ One explanation offered at the time was that the officers responsible for selecting this first group would have been foolish not to select volunteers with prior experience, and a substantial number of them would have been former British servicemen. Another, specifically addressed to the question of why eight of the first seventeen battalions were from Western Canada, is that the high levels of enlistment among young British-born men was not solely the result of their fervent loyalty. It also reflected that many of them had gone west to seek their fortune but hadn't found it because of the economic depression of the pre-war years. As in most wars, enlistment offered an escape from hunger and disappointment.¹¹²

We must also remember that the Canada of 1914 was still a very young country. When Canada was created on 1 July 1867 it comprised only four provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario. The southern portion of Manitoba was added in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, Prince Edward Island in 1873, Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905 and the northern part of Manitoba in 1912. So, men born in what was to become Canada could have been of any age, but the oldest male

¹⁰⁸ Jonathan F. Vance, "Provincial patterns of enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Military History* 17 (2008), 161.

¹⁰⁹ Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 278.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹¹¹ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 24.

¹¹² Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 21.

born in the country of Canada would have been forty-seven years old in 1914 and a native of one of the four oldest provinces. Nobody born in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or northern Manitoba after they became part of Canada would have been more than nine years old.

In 1911, 64.5 percent of the men aged eighteen to forty-five were native-born and eligible to serve (Table i). However, British-born men made the greatest proportional contribution to the CEF. Of the roughly 300,000 men born in Great Britain and her possessions, seventy-two percent volunteered their services, and sixty-three percent were posted overseas. The comparable figures for the Canadian-born eligible male population were twenty percent and eighteen percent (Table xi). The imbalance is demonstrated by the significant positive correlation between the proportion of the eligible male population that was British-born and both voluntary and total enlistment, and the negative correlations between enlistment and the proportion of the eligible population that was Canadian-born (Table vi).

By the time of the Armistice, the MSA had redressed the balance in favour of the Canadian-born (Table ix). Just over half of the total enlistments in the CEF were Canadians. They also made up the largest national group of CEF volunteers and the CEF Overseas (Table x) although their proportional representation in the overseas force was overshadowed by the British-, and particularly the Scottish-born (Table xii). However, the myth persists that Canadian-born men were willing to let others fight for them.

CONCLUSION

Most of the men who flocked to the newly-built armouries to enlist in 1914, and those who followed were neither militiamen nor Canadians.¹¹³ A century on, this hardly matters. The men and women who participated in their various ways in the First World War were not concerned with how later generations would perceive them. They could no more foresee the future than we can. They made critical decisions in the midst of confusion and uncertainty based on the best information available at the time and their own personal assessments of what mattered most.¹¹⁴ Their actions cannot be viewed through

¹¹³ Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Copp, "The Military Effort, 1914-1918," 35.

the lens of a world removed from their daily reality by a full century. During the war Canadians, “as an immigrant people, wisely put more stock in commitment than birthplace.”¹¹⁵ There is no shame in the fact that the CEF, one of the country’s first great national institutions, was dominated by the foreign-born. Wherever they were born, whatever their reasons for enlistment might have been, all the men and women in the CEF wore Canadian insignia and the headstones of those who died bear a maple leaf. Whatever they may have been before they joined the CEF, they were Canadians ever after, and their service and sacrifice is inextricably woven into the historical fabric of the country. Their commitment helped Canada come of age and, for the first time, stand proudly on the world stage in its own right.¹¹⁶



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Sharpe is a native of Ottawa, and completed his BA (Honours) degree in geography at Carleton University in 1969. He then moved to Toronto to do graduate work, where he was awarded an MA in 1972 and the PHD. in 1976. He began his teaching career at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario in January of 1974. During the 1974-75 academic year, he had a sabbatical replacement position at York University in Toronto where he taught courses in statistics and urban geography. In the fall of 1975, he accepted a position in the Department of Geography at Memorial University in St. John’s, Newfoundland and has worked there ever since. His interest in military history and geography date back to 1975 when he was given the opportunity of preparing three plates for the Historical Atlas of Canada on the domestic geography of the First and Second World Wars.

¹¹⁵ Morton, *When Your Number’s Up*, 278.

¹¹⁶ J.L. Granatstein, “Why is Canada botching the Great War centenary?” *The Globe and Mail*, 21 April, 2014, A11.

The data on which this paper and its predecessor are based were compiled by Jessie Chisholm. In 1984 she was a research assistant for the Historical Atlas of Canada project, and is now an archivist with The Provincial Archives Division of The Rooms in St. John’s, Newfoundland.

The author was saved from embarrassment by an anonymous reviewer who pointed out some errors of fact and interpretation.

The paper is better because of a critical reading by Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Wickware, Commanding Officer of the King’s Own Calgary Regiment.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Percentage Distribution, by Province, of the Male Population Aged 18–45 Years of Age, by Place of Birth, 1911

Province	Canadian	British	Foreign
Prince Edward Island	98.4	0.9	0.7
Nova Scotia	87.2	8.6	4.2
New Brunswick	93.4	3.5	3.4
Quebec	87.4	5.9	6.7
Ontario	70.6	18.4	11.1
Manitoba	40.6	32.4	27
Saskatchewan	38.5	24.5	37
Alberta	30.5	26	43.5
British Columbia	26.2	34.6	39.2
Canada	64.5	17.8	17.7

Source: *Canada Year Book 1918*, Table 11

Table 11: Percentage Distribution, by Province, of the Canadian-born, British-born and Foreign-born Male Population Aged 18–45, 1911

Province	Canadian	British	Foreign
Prince Edward Island	1.5	0.05	0.03
Nova Scotia	7.7	2.8	1.4
New Brunswick	5.8	0.8	0.7
Quebec	30.8	7.5	8.6
Ontario	37	34.9	21.2
Manitoba	4.5	13	10.9
Saskatchewan	5.5	12.7	19.3
Alberta	3.3	10.4	17.6
British Columbia	3.7	17.9	20.4
Canada	100	100	100

Source: *Canada Year Book 1918*, Table 12

Table III: Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force

Province	Place of Birth*			Place of Enlistment**	
	Number	% of total	% of Canadian-born	Number	% of total
PEI	7168	1.2	2.2	3696	0.6
Nova Scotia	32580	5.3	10.2	35723	5.8
New Brunswick	24430	3.9	7.7	27061	4.4
Quebec	67892	11	21.3	88052	14.2
Ontario	153029	24.7	48	242655	39.2
Manitoba	18364	3	5.8	66240	10.7
Saskatchewan	4763	0.8	1.5	41689	6.7
Alberta	3330	0.5	1	48885	7.9
British Columbia***	7110	1.1	2.2	55570	9
NWT	62	0			0
Canada	318728	51.4	100	609571	98.4
UK****	237586	38.3		3079	0.5
USA	35599	5.7		6986	1.1
Other	23906	3.9			0
Unknown	3817	0.6			0
Total	619636	100		619636	100

Table includes 2,854 nursing sisters (Nicholson, 1975) and all enlistment to the end of May, 1920.

* RG 24 HQ 64-1-24, Vol 22 1842, F10-42. Letter from E.L. Armstrong to the Adjutant General, 6 December, 1927, indicating 'the above figures are official.

** RG 24 HQ 64-1-24, Vol. 22. 1842, F10-42 and 1892 No. 109.

*** Includes 19 men born in the Yukon Territory

**** Includes 3,296 Newfoundlanders. In the tabulations used as the basis for this, and other tables in this paper, 'British' and 'British possessions' include the following places: England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Newfoundland, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, British South Africa, British Africa other than South Africa, British Guiana, British India and 'other British countries'. RG24 10-47E (GAQ) and HQ 64-1-24, Vol. 27, Ff. 288, 287.

Table IV: Urban and Rural Population in Canada, 1911 and Increase 1901–1911

Province	Percent Urban		Percent Change	
	1900	1911	Urban	Total
Prince Edward Island	14.5	16	0.1	9.3
Nova Scotia	28.2	37.8	43.9	17.6
New Brunswick	23.3	28.3	28.8	7.2
Quebec	39.8	48.5	47.9	21.5
Ontario	42.9	52.6	41.9	20.4
Manitoba	27.6	44	184.3	78.5
Saskatchewan	19.2	26.7	648.5	439.5
Alberta	28.2	37.9	588.2	413.1
British Columbia	50.5	51.9	125.9	119.7
Canada	37.6	45.5	62.3	34.2

Table v: Spearman Rank Correlations Between Provinces

a. Enlistment rates and demographic characteristics (*p* value, one-tailed)

	Canadian-born males as % of eligible population	British-born males as % of eligible population	Percent of Canadian male s 18-45 married
Voluntary enlistment as % of eligible population	-0.500 (.104)*	.738 (.018)*	-.333 (.210)*
Total enlistment as % of eligible population	-.667 (.050)	.783 (.013)	-.233 (.546)

b. Enlistment and urban characteristics

	Volunteers as % of enlistment	Total enlistment	% of eligible Canadian-born	% of eligible British-born	% of Canadian males 18-45 married
% of population urban	.261 (.266)*	.670 (.024)	-.433 (.122)	.517 (.077)	.267 (.244)
% urban change 1900-1911	.427 (.146)*	-.173 (.328)	-.867 (.001)	.783 (.006)	-.600 (.044)

* For eight provinces. Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are combined

Table VI: Male Voluntary Enlistment in Canada and Enlistment under the MSA as a Percentage of the Eligible Manpower by Province of Enlistment

	Eligible Males	% of Eligible	Total Enlistment*		Voluntary Enlistment**		Conscription***		Men attested****	
			#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
PEI	16824	1.1	3696	22					777	4.6
Nova Scotia	95760	6.2	35723	37					4665	4.9
PEI/NS	112584	7.3	39151	35	60533	27.1	8886	7.9	5442	4.8
New Brunswick	68097	4.4	27061	39.7	20132	29.6	6929	10.2	5157	7.6
Quebec	376232	24.5	87480	23.4	58252	15.5	29800	7.9	19050	5.1
Ontario	536169	34.9	241540	45.3	202786	37.8	39869	19.7	27087	5.1
Manitoba	108336	7	66069	61.1	54677	50.5	11563	10.7	6787	6.3
Saskatchewan	130250	8.5	41619	32	31067	23.9	10622	8.2	8204	6.3
Alberta	93375	6.1	48762	52.4	39752	42.6	9133	9.8	5987	6.4
British Columbia	109448	7.1	55427	50.8	47784	43.7	7786	7.1	5641	5.2
NWT	2681	0.2								
Canada	1537172	100	609571	31.6	484983	19.7	124588	8.1	83355	5.4

Excluding Nursing Sisters. The number of eligible males was calculated by the author as the number of males 18-45 as reported in the 1911 Census of Canada, less the number of foreign-born males in 1911 multiplied by the percent of foreign-born males aged 21 and over in 1911 who were still classed as 'alien'. The numbers given for voluntary enlistment differ from those given in the most commonly-referenced source (Stacey, 1981: 235). His data were based on Sessional paper 264 of 1919, which was not compiled by the Department of National Defence, and was written before it was possible to check with actual documentation which became available later'. (Coleman, 1942)

* RG 24, Vol. 1892, No. 109.

** Statement prepared 6 May, 1929 by G.J. Desbarats, Deputy Minister, DND in response to an inquiry of the Minister by Mr. Garland (Carleton), Order of the Day No. 55, HQ 64-1-24.

*** Statement dated 24 February, 1942 (Coleman). These numbers agree with those in Duguid (1938: 50).

**** RG24 1842 File GAQ 10-44. Compiled 12 August, 1944. Historical Section, DND.

Table VII: Married Canadian-Born Men as Percent of Males 20–45 by 5-year age groups

Province	20-45	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Prince Edward Island	45.4	9	34.4	56.7	69.9	76.5
Nova Scotia	50.6	13.2	41.5	62.8	73.8	78.5
New Brunswick	53.9	15.8	47.5	66.9	76.4	79.8
Quebec	59.6	20.1	60	76.1	83.1	84.5
Ontario	54	18.3	47.4	65.6	74.8	78.5
Manitoba	48.3	11.4	40	65.9	74.7	79.5
Saskatchewan	43.2	11.3	35.8	55.4	68.9	76.2
Alberta	45	19.8	34.3	53.8	63.3	72.7
British Columbia	42.1	21.5	30.6	46.4	56.7	64
Canada	53.7	17.7	47.3	65.6	75.8	79.6

Source: Unprinted Session Paper 194, R.H. Coates, Dominion Statistician and Controller of the Census, 12 June, 1917.

Table VIII: The Results of the Military Service Act 1917

Status of Men	Number
Class I Registrations	401822
Granted exemption	221949
Liable for Military Service	179933
Unapprehended defaulters: 24,139	
Available but not called: 26,225	
Reported for Military Service	129569
Permitted to enlist in Imperial forces*	8445
Taken on strength CEF	124588
Performed no military service and struck off strength upon being found medically unfit, eligible for exemption or liable for non-combatant service only	16300
Available for service with CEF units	108288
Discharged prior to 11 Nov 1918	**8637
On strength CEF, 11 Nov 1918	***99,651
Proceeded overseas	47509
Taken on strength units in France	24132

Source: Nicholson (1962: 551)

* RAF, Royal Engineers Inland Water Transport and other units.

** This number is explained by Nicholson (1962: 553). In addition to the 24,933 men on leave of absence (see note below), European War Memorandum #6 indicates that 'at the signing of the Armistice there were 10,296 on 'compassionate leave while in addition there were some 6,000 on harvest leave'. Thus about 16,296 of the 24,933 were on either harvest or compassionate leave on 11 November, 1918. It seems reasonable to conclude that the remaining 8,637 had been discharged prior to the Armistice.

*** The most commonly-reported number is 83,355 which appeared in European War Memorandum #6 (Sessional Paper 179, tabled 28 May, 1920). However, an important qualifying statement is generally overlooked or ignored. This reveals that in addition to the 83,355 'there were also 24,933 on leave without pay under the Orders in Council relating to compassionate leave and hardship cases, or subsequently discharged, making a total of 108,288'. Furthermore, the Report of the Director of the Military Service Branch notes that none of the reported figures included 26,225 men whose applications for exemption had finally been refused, and who were, therefore, available for call-up at the time of the Armistice.

Table IX: Composition of the CEF by Place of Birth

Place of Birth	First Contingent*		Military Service Act**		Service in Canada				Total Canadian Expeditionary Force***				Total	
	No.	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Canada	10880	30	***92302	75.6	119776	61	199652	47	318728	54.4				
Anglophone	9635	26.6												
Francophone	1245	3.4												
Newfoundland					1008	0.5	2288	0.5	3296	0.5				
England	15232	42	9106	7.5	29126	14.9	127571	30	156697	25.3				
Scotland	5440	15	3519	2.9	7879	4	39548	9.3	47427	7.7				
Ireland	2176	6	1756	1.4	4791	2.5	14536	3.4	19327	3.1				
Wales	563	1	339	0.2	946	0.4	3773	0.9	4719	0.8				
Total Br. Isles	32211	64			42742	21.9	185428	43.6	228170	36.8				
Other British			1091	0.9	1467	0.8	4653	1.1	6120	1				
U.S.A.	130	0.4	8139	6.7	15633	8	19966	4.7	35599	5.7				
Other	56	..	3894	4.8	11391	5.8	12515	2.9	23906	3.9				
Not stated	2010	5.6			3730	1.9	87	0.2	3817	0.6				
Total	36267	100	122146	100	195047	100	424589	100	619656	100				

* A note to this table states: 'Nationalities are based on replies given to the question: "What is your country of birth?"; French Canadians are credited with the full strength of French Canadian units, and all men bearing French names and born in Canada are called French Canadians. The figures for this contingent were revised in 1936 to show: Canadian 29.9, British Isles 60.4, Other British Possessions 0.5, U.S.A. 2.5, Other Foreign 1.7. Not stated 3.4. This revision incorporated data on 30,617 soldiers, approximately the number who went overseas in the first sailing of 29 September, 1914. (Duguid, 1938 Vol. II, Appendix 86, p. 58).

** Maj. Clyde R. Scott, Assistant Director of Records for Adjutant General to D.O.C. Military District NO. 12, Regina, 9 March, 1928, HQ 64-1-24, Vol. 23 F.35.

*** These number include both Nursing Sisters (3,141) and enlistments outside Canada. Maj. Clyde R. Scott, Assistant Director of Records for Adjutant General to A.M. Anderson, Vancouver, B.C. 3 October, 1929, HQ, 64-1-24, Vol. 25, F.123

**** English speaking: 64,745, French-speaking: 27,557

Table x: Components of the CEF as a percent of men by place of birth

	Number of enlistments	First Contingent+	Volunteers to 31 Oct/17	Total Volunteers	CEF Overseas	MSA	Total CEF
Canadian	318728	34	44.9	45.5	47	75.6	51.4
British*	237586	64	49.1	44.6	44.8	12.9	37.8
Other	63322	6	6	9.9	7.7	11.5	10.8
Total	619636	36267	439806	497490	424589	122146	100

* Including the British Isles and colonies.

Table XI: Components of the CEF as a Percent of Eligible Male Population by Place of Birth

	Eligible	First Contingent	Volunteers** to 31 Oct/17	Total Volunteers	CEF Overseas	MSA	Total CEF
Canadian	1113244	0.98	17.7	20.3	17.9	8.3	28.6
British*	307419	7.6	70.2	72.1	62.6	5.1	77.3
Other	116509	1.9	22.8	42.3	28	12	51.1
Total	1537172	2.3	28.6	32.6	27.6	7.9	40.3

* Including the British Isles and colonies

** The MSA came into force on 13 October 1917. Recruiting was practically at a standstill at that date, and MSA recruits were not available for some time after it, so 'it may be taken that the figures up to 31 October 1917 represent accurately the volunteer effort'. Note by 'F.C.' in HQ 64-1-24, Vol. 23, F. 35. + Figures compiled in 1936 modified the earlier statements about the origins of this group 'particularly in respect to U.S. born'. (RG24, CEF Personnel – Statistics, 10-47e. A handwritten note says 'copied from HQ 64-1-24, Vol. 22). The revised table gives the origin of 30,617 men, approximately the number who sailed in the first convoy of 3 October, 1914 as: Canada, 29.9; British Isles, 60.4; Other British possessions, 2.2; U.S.A., 2.5; Other foreign, 3.4; Not stated, 3.4 percent.

Table x11: CEF Nationality and Area of Service

Nationality	Total CEF	O/S service	Home service	% of group overseas
Canadian	318728	199652	119076	62.6
Newfoundland	3296	2288	3,296	69.4
English	156697	127571	29,126	81.4
Scottish	47427	39548	7,879	83.4
Welsh	4719	3773	946	80
Irish	19327	14536	4791	52.2
Other British	6120	4653	1467	76
Total British	237586	192369	47505	81
American	35599	19966	15633	56.1
Other foreign	23906	12575	11,391	52.4
Total foreign	59505	32481	27024	54.6
Not stated	3817	87	3730	2.3
Total	619636	424589	195,047	68.5

Source: Militia and Defense Records, HQ 64-1-24, vol. 25, F. 123. Maj. C.R. Scott, Assistant Director of Records for the Adjutant-General, to A.M. Anderson, Esq., Vancouver, B.C. 3 October, 1929