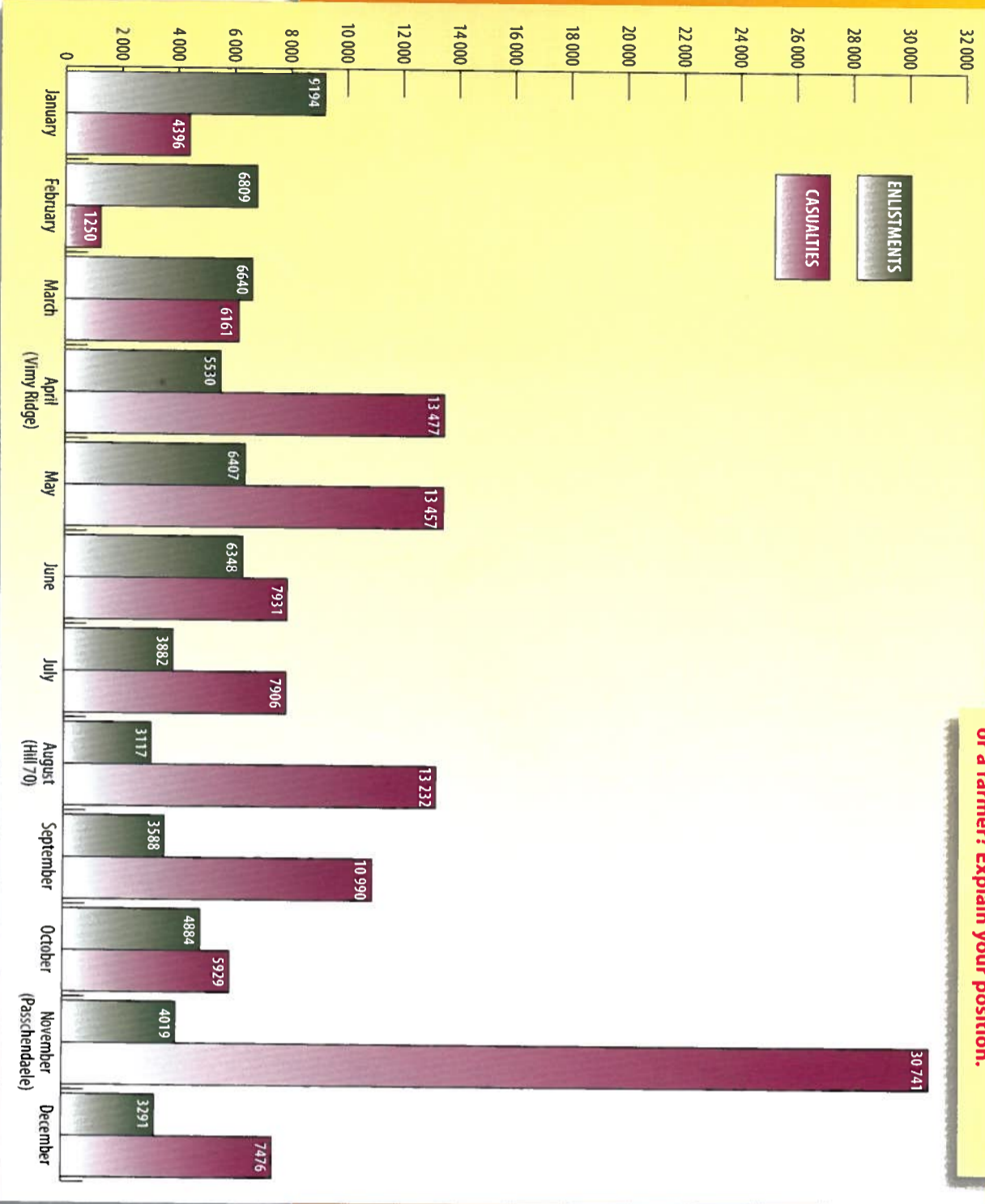


In December 1914, Prime Minister Borden had told the Canadian people that “there has not been, there will not be, compulsion or conscription.” However, by 1916, Canadian forces in Europe needed 75 000 men annually just to replace losses. By 1917, enlistments were so low that the army often sent wounded soldiers back to the front before they had fully recovered from their wounds.

Evidence 1.10



Source: Data from Statistics Canada.

Enlistments versus casualties, 1917.
What would you do if you were prime minister and were faced with these statistics? Assume that you, like Borden and other leaders, believed that the war would go on for a long time yet. What would be your stand if you were a French Canadian or a farmer? Explain your position.

On August 28, 1917, the government reluctantly passed the *Military Service Act*, which allowed conscription of single men between the ages of 20 and 35 if necessary. In November 1917, Borden and a new Union party, made up of the Conservative Party and English-speaking Liberals, won the federal election. On January 1, 1918, the new government began to enforce the *Military Service Act*. French Canadians in particular opposed conscription, sometimes violently. While the strongest and most violent reaction was in Quebec, there were demonstrations else-

where as well. In June 1918, farmers from across Canada staged a massive protest in Ottawa. They complained that the exemptions from military service given to their sons at the beginning of the war were being taken away—at a time when their sons were desperately needed at home. Labour leaders, too, opposed conscription and considered calling a general strike in protest. Conscription raised about 120 000 soldiers, of whom 47 000 men went overseas. However, the war ended before most of these men faced combat.

SOME STATISTICS TO THINK ABOUT

- When war was declared, only 10 percent of the population of Canada was British-born. Yet 33 000 troops that went to Britain in October 1914, two-thirds had been born in the Brits and had immigrated to Canada in the 15 years before 1914.
- By the end of the war in 1918, of English-Canadian volunteers, 70 percent were recent immigrants from Britain.
- One thousand French Canadian volunteers were in the first contingent to go to Britain.
- French Canadians who volunteered for overseas service did not, at the outset of the war, regard it as their own. They were scattered throughout the army, serving under English-officers. Instruction manuals were in English. French-Canadian soldiers, no matter how well they were generally not promoted to high officer positions. Even after a French regiment was formed, many French volunteers continued to be scattered throughout English-speaking companies.
- In Quebec, most recruitment was carried out by Protestant, often English-speaking, clergy.
- Most Canadian-born men of military age, regardless of language, did not volunteer. Included among these Canadians were farmers; immigrants from European countries other than Britain; labourers; and married men. Farmers and labourers argued that they and their families including service-aged sons, were needed to carry out the work of growing food and manufacturing supplies for the war effort. As well, Doukhobors, Mennonites, and Hutterites with many other Canadians, were pacifists and resisted going to war.

Evidence 1.12



From 1916 on, and especially during the conscription crisis, in English Canada there were often efforts to shame men into enlisting. Here, soldiers stand by a sign denouncing men who did not sign up for the war. Members of the women's organization Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE) and others pinned a white chicken feather on men who were not in the services to expose them as “cowards.”

What impact would this action have on the men who had not enlisted? What would you have done in response, and why?

1. Assume you are a young person in 1914 who could be called on to help in the war effort. Write a supported opinion paragraph on whichever argument presented in Section One you would support and why. (An opinion paragraph presents a clear opinion or point of view on a topic. Begin with a clear topic sentence, such as whether you would support the war effort in 1914. In the body of the paragraph, provide reasons and evidence, including facts, examples, or quotations to support your opinion. Use words to persuade the reader of your opinion. End with a concluding sentence.)
2. In small groups of four to six, debate one of the following statements, with a focus on causes and consequences:
 - a) Canada should have provided any support Britain requested (military, supplies, etc.)
 - b) Conscription was the only possible solution to the shortage of voluntary enlistment in 1917.
3. Create an organizer of causes and consequences for Canada's decision to support Britain with a military force. Give evidence for your entries. Differentiate between intended and unintended consequences.