



**SUPPLY
LINE**

The War and Daily Life

The Second World War mobilized industrial, natural and human resources, transforming Canadians' lives. The war also helped draw Canada out of the Great Depression. It took hundreds of thousands of Canadians far from home for military service and war-related work.

An Economic Boom

The war effort led to an economic boom in Canada as Canadians joined the military or

found new jobs. For some – especially women – these were their first paid jobs.

Conscription: Mandatory Military Service

In 1940, the government introduced **conscription**, requiring Canadian men to join the army for military training. Initially, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King promised not to send **conscripts** outside Canada. However, by 1944, the Canadian army in Europe was short of reinforcements. A difficult debate in Canada ended with conscripted soldiers

being sent overseas to fight. Service in the navy and air force remained voluntary.

The *National Resources Mobilization Act*, which introduced conscription, also required Canadian men and women who were 16 or older to register with the government. This allowed controls on where people worked and the jobs they could have.

Enemies – Real and Imagined

Canada **interned** thousands of people viewed as threats. This was in addition to the more than 21,000 Japanese Canadians who were

uprooted and forcibly relocated. Prisoner of war camps in Canada also held roughly 34,000 captured German troops.

Supporting the War Effort

The Canadian government raised funds to help pay for the war through Victory Bonds, War Savings Certificates and War Savings Stamps. To avoid economic problems, especially inflation, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board controlled prices and wages.

The government asked people not to hoard food and other goods. It also expected Canadians to make good use of what they had. Rationing was introduced to control the availability and price of goods. Canadians received tokens and ration books containing stamps for many goods that were limited

during the war. These included gasoline, butter, sugar, meat, tea and coffee.

Salvage drives collected recyclable materials to turn into wartime supplies. Canadians of all ages volunteered to contribute to the war effort in many ways. Some knit woollen clothing. Others collected books, newspapers and other comforts for service personnel. Groups and individuals raised funds or sold Victory Bonds and War Savings Stamps. Some people volunteered for civil defence, training to help out in case of an enemy attack.

Children and War

The war also affected children. Some raised funds or helped with salvage drives. Schoolwork, games and toys were often war-related. Rationing meant that favourite foods such as eggs or meat, and treats like chocolate, could be scarce. Older children were expected to become more involved in the war effort. They volunteered on farms or trained as military cadets.

Children and their families also lived with loneliness and worry. Relatives and friends could leave on military service, and be wounded or killed. Many were away for months or years.

Some families relocated for war-related jobs. Wartime housing could be crowded, especially in large cities and the communities around war-related industries.

Vocabulary

- Conscription:** Requiring people to serve in the military.
- Conscript:** A person who has been conscripted.
- Internment:** The imprisonment of people, including enemy nationals, usually without criminal charges, in wartime. It is often used to describe the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, even though it is not strictly speaking correct for almost all of them, but other terms are also used. They include uprooting, forced relocation, and incarceration.

Timeline



