 **Canada’s Role in the British Empire**

**Introduction**

* After Confederation, responsibility for Canada’s defence and foreign relations remained with Britain;
* Britain had strongest military power in the world;
* Would secure Canada from foreign threats;
* In late 1800s, cost of steam-powered warships increased and Britain needed colonies for help to keep up with Germany;
* Britain issued demands of support from Empire countries.

**Demands of Canada and the British Empire**

* Supply troops, when requested, to fight in wars under British command to defend Empire;
* Maintain naval vessels for their own defence, but place them under British command in times of war;
* Send money to Britain to help with the increased costs of defending the Empire.

**Canadian Attitudes Toward Defending the Empire**

* English-Canadian Attitudes:
  + Majority of English speaking Canadians were of British origin;
  + Felt a duty to help Britain;
* French-Canadian Attitudes:
  + Generally opposed to help British conflicts;
  + Britain was not their homeland;
  + Even less keen to defend France – Britain’s ally.

**The Imperial Federation Debate**

* Began in the 1890s;
* Led by Joseph Chamberlain;
* Believed dominions should build navies that could be placed under British control;
* Supporters for Imperial Federation believed that it was an opportunity for Canada;
* Opposition was worried about being under control of Britain.

**Conclusion**

* Canada’s role in the British Empire was a subject of much debate in the 1890s;
* There were strong opinions on the various issues;
* There was also little room for compromise.