

## **UCCLA MEDIA RELEASE**

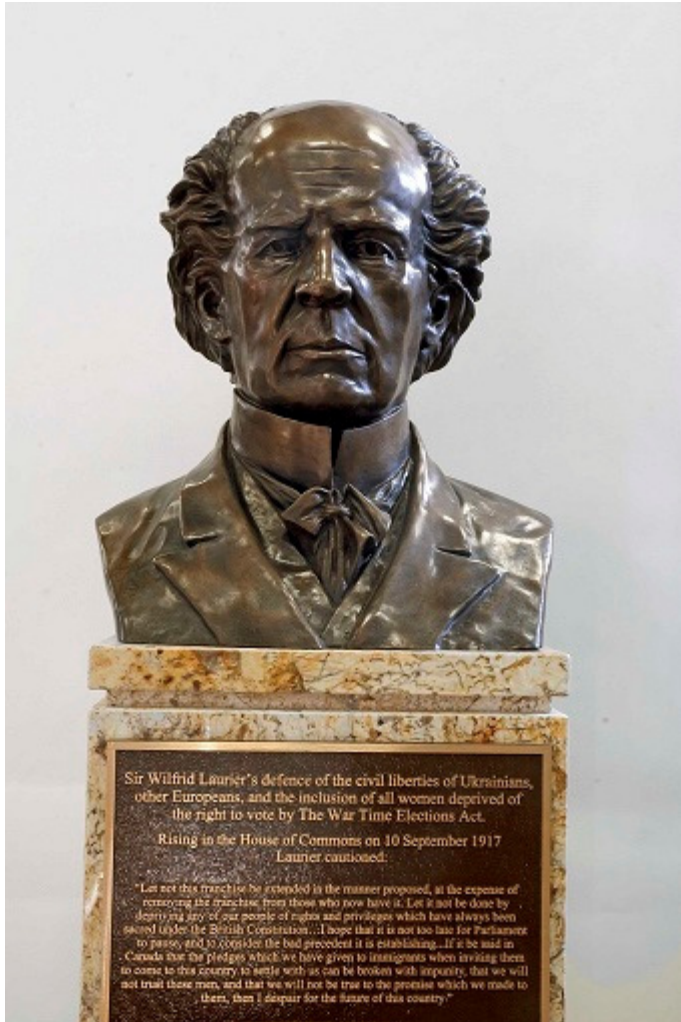
# **SIR WILFRID LAURIER HONOURED FOR HIS DEFENCE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN WARTIME**

**Ottawa - For Immediate Release (18 November 2015)**

On Friday, 20 November 2015, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's staunch defence of the civil liberties of "enemy aliens" will be remembered with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and bronze bust of Canada's 7<sup>th</sup> prime minister at the Laurier House National Historic Site, in Ottawa. This initiative was organized by the Trutiak Family (MST Bronze Ltd) with the support of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation and Parks Canada. Louise Laurier, a descendant, will be unveiling the likeness.

During the First World War, and in the midst of a crisis over military conscription, the Unionist Government of Sir Robert Borden passed The War Time Elections Act (10 September 1917) which effectively disenfranchised anyone who had immigrated to Canada after March 1902, stripping the right to vote from tens of thousands of Ukrainians and other Europeans branded as "enemy aliens" through passage of The War Measures Act (22 August 1914). Laurier, then leader of the Liberal opposition in the House of Commons, protested this measure, saying he despaired for the future of the country if the promises made to these immigrants were betrayed. Despite his determined stand, the government was able to pass the Act, ironically while allowing some women the right to vote for the first time in Canada's history (the wives, sisters and widows of soldiers serving overseas in the Canadian Expeditionary Force).

Commenting on this project, UCCLA's Director of Research Dr Lubomyr Luciuk, said: "While Laurier was not successful in his protest of The War Time Elections Act, he took an unpopular stance in the House of Commons because it was the right thing to do and did so during a time of war and domestic crisis. For that we are honouring him with this bust and plaque, recognizing the principled position he took in defence of the civil liberties of so-called 'enemy aliens.' Laurier demonstrated remarkable statesmanship when all around him others exposed their prejudices and xenophobia. Laurier's words bear remembering, for their currency remains valid to this day."



For more information, please Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, Director of Research, [luciuk@uccla.ca](mailto:luciuk@uccla.ca)

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The Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (L'Association ukrainienne-canadienne des droits civils) is a non-partisan, voluntary, non-profit research and educational organization committed to the articulation and promotion of the Ukrainian Canadian community's interests and to the defence of the civil liberties and human rights of Ukrainians in Canada and elsewhere.

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