



The Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology

Dr. Karen Metheny, Chair
367 Burroughs Rd.
Boxborough, MA USA 01719
kmetheny@bu.edu

June 5, 2012

The Right Honorable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Prime Minister Harper:

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology, and on behalf of all of our members in Canada and the United States, I wish to express our deepest concern with the proposed budget cuts and layoffs of key professionals at Parks Canada. This institution has justifiably received world-wide acclaim as a premier center of learning, preservation, and historical inquiry. The budget cuts enacted by your government are truly draconian and will decimate this gem of Canadian history and culture.

Parks Canada is charged with the protection of irreplaceable cultural, historical, and archaeological resources; this agency is also responsible for the administration of the Canadian Register of Historic Places. Parks Canada and the Canadian government have been entrusted with the care and protection of these resources by the Canadian people. The Parks Canada charter states further that this agency's representatives will serve as guardians, guides, partners, and storytellers/educators on behalf of the Canadian people. These responsibilities are irreversibly compromised by budget reductions that will result in the closure of all regional facilities, the relocation of collections to Ottawa, and the reduction of the Parks Canada staff by more than half. It is impossible for this agency's mandate to be fulfilled with the elimination of so many staff members, the closure of its facilities, and the relocation of its collections. The reduction in staffing, which impacts as much as eighty percent of Parks Canada personnel in some regional service centers, also will have an immediate and detrimental impact on heritage tourism and on the tourism industry generally, one that generates billions of dollars of revenue annually in Canada, and millions of dollars for regional and local economies.

These cuts put at risk not only the resources under the immediate protection of Parks Canada, including the forty-two National Parks, four National Marine Conservation Areas, one National Landmark, and 167 National Historic Sites that are under its stewardship, but also the combined material collections and resources of the regional research centers that will be shuttered or left with a single archaeologist to carry out the agency's mandated responsibilities. Critical institutional knowledge and leadership in the areas of historical and archaeological inquiry, research, conservation, and interpretation will also be lost.

Finally, the removal of archaeological, historical, and ethnographic collections from their regional centers of origin will put at risk efforts to document, preserve, and disseminate the heritage of all Canada's ethnic groups, but most especially First Nation and minority populations. The end result for Canada's regional populations is the physical dispossession of their material and cultural heritage, and the loss of the means to protect, study, and interpret that heritage. This action represents a violation of the trust extended to Parks Canada and the Canadian government by *all* Canadians to protect and preserve the country's heritage resources.

The Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology is a non-profit educational organization with over 400 members in the eastern United States and Canada. Our membership comprises professional archaeologists, historians, educators, and cultural resource specialists. The Council was founded by professional and avocational archaeologists and historians who shared an awareness of and sense of urgency concerning the need to preserve and protect the historical archaeological record and to share that past with others. We are thus compelled to comment most strongly on an action that will have a devastating and irreversible effect on Canada's heritage resources.

The decision to cut funding to Parks Canada might or might not result in overall short-term savings for the Canadian national budget but it will almost certainly result in far greater costs in future years when it becomes apparent that Parks Canada cannot fulfill its mission without restoring regional centers. We urge you to reverse the budgetary actions taken by your government in April and to take immediate action to restore funding and staffing that is necessary for Parks Canada to fulfill its mandated responsibilities as steward and manager of the country's historical, archaeological and cultural resources for the people of Canada.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen Metheny
Chair, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology www.cneha.org

cc:

Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment
James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
Alain Latourelle, Parks Canada Agency
William Ross, Canadian Archaeological Association
Eldon Yellowhorn, Canadian Archaeological Association
Frederick Limp, Society for American Archaeology
Paul Mullins, Society for Historical Archaeology
Elizabeth Bartman, Archaeological Institute of America
Kate Pretty, Council for British Archaeology
Gustavo Araoz, ICOMOS
Claire Smith, World Archaeological Congress
Claudio Valentino, Archaeology Magazine
John Fahey, National Geographic Society
Michael Caruso, Smithsonian Magazine
The Globe and Mail
The National Post