



**SOCIETY *for*  
HISTORICAL  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

**Paul Mullins**

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May 23, 2012

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

Mr. Prime Minister:

Parks Canada has an enviable reputation as one of the leading agencies in heritage management in the world and this is particularly true of research, conservation, site development, collections management and visitor experiences carried out by your highly qualified archaeological teams. This is on the verge of changing in a dramatic and irreversible manner.

The Society for Historical Archaeology has learned that the Agency has recently proceeded with massive compressions to its personnel and services. The SHA is the largest international organization dedicated to the archaeological study of the historic past on land and underwater, and in January 2014 we will hold our annual conference in Quebec City. It is especially demoralizing to look forward to that conference knowing that 40% of Parks Canada's personnel are affected coast-to-coast, 60% of the personnel coming from regional service centers, the home port of Parks archaeologists, collections managers and curators. Indeed, this latter group of personnel has been particularly hard hit with reductions reaching 80% of personnel. Regional infrastructures such as conservation laboratories, archaeological and ethnological collections will be closed and relocated to Ottawa. Given the scale of these cuts and their concentration in one sector, we cannot understand how your Agency intends to maintain its world-class standards and continue to serve as an example within the country and throughout the world. Our concerns echo many media reports such as a recent article in the *Toronto Star* (Job cuts will hurt preservation of Canada's past, say experts, May 17, 2012)

Beyond the legitimate concerns for the protection and the development of archaeological resources in this context, we also believe that these cuts will have detrimental effects on regional economies and on the active participation of your citizenry in the promotion of heritage knowledge.

Though economic arguments are important, you should also consider the social importance of the proposed cuts. The Agency supplies valuable services, namely, providing public education and dissemination of information concerning important places, buildings, and archaeological sites review of National Historic Place evaluations and nominations; and management plans that establish procedures for administering and studying historic properties and historical resources throughout the country. It is instrumental in promoting the importance of preserving heritage resources for social and economical reasons. Mr. Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment, clearly demonstrated this in a presentation before the Tourism Association of Canada (National Parks Rake in Billions from Tourists, *Postmedia News*, November 24, 2011).

Many of our members live and work in Canada. As a thousand archaeologists from around the world prepare to meet for our conference in Québec City in January 2014, it will be sad for us to greet conference attendees with the news of the implosion of the country's key agency for heritage resource management. It would be even more uncomfortable for our Canadian members to vaunt the merits of their country and its government to their national and international colleagues after such an action.

For these reasons, we support the position adopted by the Canadian Archaeological Association enjoining you to reconsider the measures that were announced in April of this year.

Please contact me if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Paul Mullins  
President

cc:

William Ross, Canadian Archaeological Association  
Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment  
James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages  
Alain Latourelle, Parks Canada Agency  
Frederick Limp, Society for American Archaeology  
Elizabeth Bartman, Archaeological Institute of America  
Kate Pretty, Council for British Archaeology  
Gustavo Araoz, ICOMOS  
Claudia Valentino, Archaeology Magazine