

THE SOCIETY FOR POST-MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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3 August 2012

The Rt Hon Stephen Harper

Prime Minister of Canada

Office of the Prime Minister

80 Wellington Street

Ottawa ON K1A 0A2

Canada

Dear Prime Minister

Cutbacks at Parks Canada

On behalf of the membership of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology (SPMA), I am writing to protest about the drastic cutbacks in staff and services at *Parks Canada*. The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology (www.spma.org.uk) was founded in 1966 to promote the study of the archaeology of late medieval to present-day society in Britain, Europe and those countries affected by early modern globalisation. The Society now covers the archaeology of the period from about 1500 up to the present day, and serves an international membership, including Canadians. We greatly value close links with professional colleagues in Canada.

We are proud of having published a volume in 2009 of papers on the archaeology of Quebec (*Post-Medieval Archaeology* 43/1). This was in recognition of the outstanding contribution of Quebec to historical archaeology, representing an achievement which very few historic towns in North America or Europe could match. In June 2010 we held our conference on *Exploring New World transitions: From Seasonal Presence to Permanent Settlement* at St John's, Newfoundland to mark the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the Cupers Cove Plantation, the first English colony in what is now Canada.

We are concerned that the cutbacks at *Parks Canada* will severely hamper or inhibit future historical archaeological research in Canada, will put at risk the superb range of national parks and historic sites maintained by *Parks Canada* and the artefacts associated with them, resulting in less enjoyment by visitors of these facilities and less understanding of their significance and importance. It is our judgement that the cutbacks are so severe that even if money and resources are provided again in a few years time to bring staffing levels back to their optimum too much will have been lost in the meantime to make this an easy task.

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Registered Company No. (England) 1477528. Registered Charity No. 281651

Registered Office: c/o Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE

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Bodies like *Parks Canada* depend for their undoubted excellence on dedicated and experienced staff who have imbued knowledge and understanding of their areas of expertise from working within the organisation. Unless more staff can be retained there is a very real danger of much of the inherited knowledge and skills of *Parks Canada* being lost for good.

We also wish to stress that cutbacks at *Parks Canada* is not just a local issue. *Parks Canada* is a very distinguished body with an international reputation for its archaeological and historical research, its conservation of sites, monuments and artefacts, and for its outreach and learning programmes. The sites and monuments in its care are not just of local interest to Canadians but are an important part of the heritage of us all. We venture to suggest that you may not fully have taken into account the full economic impact of the cutbacks in terms of discouraging visitors, national and international, from visiting your splendid sites and monuments.

We hope very much that your Government will reconsider its policy on this issue.

Yours faithfully

Dr David H Caldwell
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cc:

The Hon Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment, Canada
William Ross, Canadian Archaeological Association
The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, UK