



Quebec, May 15, 2012

Re: Cutbacks to Parks Canada

As archaeologists teaching and conducting research at Laval University in Quebec City, we are extremely concerned about job cuts made to the archeology staff and programs at Parks Canada by the federal Conservative government. Simply defined as "the study of human behavior through the material remains of peoples of all places and all times", our practice as professionals deals with the past of Canada and that of Quebec in particular.

The scope of the recently-announced cuts at Parks Canada are not well known to the general public because of the complicated means of job attrition applied by the Harper government to its agencies involved in research on the environment and generally in social sciences. The gradual reductions of positions, such as the non-replacement of retirees, and the limited media access to the Federal government make it difficult to have a complete image of the cuts under way. The budget cutting plan will take a very heavy toll on Parks Canada's Quebec Service Centre with 51 employees, or 60% of the Centre's 85 staff affected. Of the 51 people remaining, six employees associated with the conservation of ethnographic and archaeological collections will be transferred to Ottawa along with collections in the next two years. Thirteen of the 51 people affected will be voluntary departures, resulting in a total of 32 employees who will lose their jobs outright, including two out of three archaeologists currently employed. It is also important to note that, in February 2012, the Quebec Service Centre archeology team had already been reduced from 12 to five employees, this amount to two successive cuts of 58% and 60% of the team's workforce respectively in two months and the crippling of a very active agency. At the Quebec Service Centre, a team of 12 will be reduced to a single archaeologist and one curator of collections! Such dismantling represents a drastic loss of capacity for research and in Parks Canada's capability to achieve its mission to educate and inform visitors to national parks and historic sites.

The situation is equally alarming in other regions of Canada. A document entitled Work Force Adjustment dated April 29, (released by the National Directorate of Parks Canada) gives a detailed sketch of the job cutting plan. In the Atlantic Provinces, eight of 12 archaeologists will be cut. In Ottawa, though the Underwater Archaeology Unit will be untouched, the whole section in material culture (five researchers) will be lost. At the Service Centre in Cornwall, six out of seven researchers will be terminated, leaving that office with a single junior part-time archaeologist. In the Western and Northern regions operating out of Winnipeg, seven of ten archaeologists will lose their positions. A team of seven archaeologists at the Calgary Centre will be cut back to a single assistant archaeologist while in British Columbia, the scene of cutting edge research into the entry of humans into North America, a team of two people is reduced to one. Finally, a single archaeologist will be responsible for Parks Canada jurisdictions in the Canadian Arctic (a region covering over 120 000 km²)! One wonders what political agenda justifies such an operation.

Ironically, these cuts, motivated essentially by an accounting exercise and incomprehension of what Canadian cultural heritage represents, will cause significant damage to the economy of Canada. Notwithstanding the magical thinking of Minister Christian Paradis "We will provide better services with fewer employees.",

destroying the expertise developed over long years and reducing access to historic sites developed at great expense since the 1970s, this will have an immediate deleterious effect on the quality of visitors' experiences and ultimately on visitor numbers and revenues. Furthermore, the physical integrity of the historic sites left unmonitored by cutbacks, could be permanently affected by road or housing developments in Canadian Parks, by natural processes such as erosion, or by looting. Even worse, experts laid off by such meaningless conservative actions will join the already long list of unemployed advanced degree holders an unnecessary loss of human capital.

In the short term, the consequences of such cutbacks will not only degrade the quality of life of qualified Parks Canada personnel, the quintessence of what constitutes Canadian heritage and what it means for our economy will also be affected. The negative impacts of the government's cutbacks to National Historic Sites and National Parks owned by Canadians but whose management has been entrusted to the Government by its people will have a devastating effect on the cultural and natural resources upon which this country's identity and reputation are founded. These cuts will affect four strategic areas of development. First of all, the international leadership of the Parks and National Historic Sites will be deeply affected by the layoffs of qualified personnel whose expertise is based on half a century of experience. As well, the strength and forward-looking vision of Parks Canada during the 1970's was to build a national network of research facilities in Halifax, Quebec, Cornwall, Winnipeg and Calgary. These infrastructures were equipped with laboratories for research, conservation and restoration of heritage resources as well as documentation centres and repositories for regional archaeological and ethnological collections in support of exhibitions, along with publications for visitors and the local population. The regional service centres across Canada contributed to our knowledge of Canada's heritage and constituted major regional development leverage. These infrastructures will now be literally reduced to nothing. Each of these centers assembled a critical mass of professionals to document our past and communicate knowledge about our national heritage; whether in Quebec or in other provinces, the national network that was developed is the envy of many countries. Reducing that network to a shadow of what it was destroys Park's capacity to fulfill its public mission. Archaeological and historical research permitted Parks Canada to create a direct link with the local population and its heritage; whether at Red Bay in Labrador or the Kluane National Park and Reserve in the Yukon, multiple success stories enhance our understanding and appreciation of what makes Canadian cultural and natural history. Protecting the integrity of these sites is part of sustainable development and fosters public interest now and for generations to come.

These cutbacks will result in the displacement of regional collections from their places of origin to the national capital region (without the senior researchers currently responsible for them!). This policy will likely break the often-fragile links that exist between vulnerable local communities, and their heritage and identity. An article published in *Le Journal de Quebec* (May 8, 2012), reports on this problem, noting "that the drama is the removal of archaeological and ethnological collections of Quebec City, a city recognized as a member of the UNESCO World Heritage and cradle of French civilization in North America ... ". The removal of these collections from their milieu, and of the extensive documentation generated by archaeological investigations with them, will sever the existing connection between Parks Canada researchers and curators, visitors and the local population, weakening the community's capacity to confront, learn about and reflect upon their cultural heritage.

In economic terms, the cultural tourism industry with its national and international visitors makes a major financial contribution to the economy; archaeological research contributes to the development of these sites and has a direct impact on the development of their economy. Whether in a World Heritage City such as Quebec, a flagship site such as the Fortress of Louisburg, or a national park such as Banff, where the interaction of culture and nature over 10,000 years have been brought to light, archeology figures prominently in the quality of life of residents and contributes significantly to economic development through tourism and decent jobs. Archaeology goes a long way to creating wealth and forging our identity.

Before dispossessing regions of parts of their cultural and economic infrastructures and the specialists who contribute significantly to the shaping of our heritage, it should be noted that every dollar spent on culture is an investment with an impact on many sectors of society. Cultural tourism is a powerful motor of economic growth, and our research on understanding and explanation of historical events provides content for cultural tourism. A report published in January 2010 on the impact of tourism in Quebec City during the 400th anniversary celebrations in 2008 noted the presence of 2.4 million visitors and investments of \$ 438 million (\$ 89 million in infrastructure and \$ 63 million for the organization), which corresponds to an increase of 20% of the economic value created by tourism, \$ 1.6 billion annually.

This begs the question: What is the significance of natural and cultural heritage sites and why do we study them? The effort invested in studying heritage sites is proportional to their significance. Sites deemed of national historic significance (L'Anse aux Meadows, Louisburg, the Forts and Châteaux St. Louis, the Forges du Saint-Maurice, the network of canals, Lower Fort Garry, or prehistoric sites such as in Banff National Park or those on the West Coast, etc.) have been designated by the Historical Commission of Canada by a very rigorous process. Archaeological research on those sites must be done with cutting edge practices. This cannot be improvised or limited to a simple inventory or survey. Work on these sites of national significance must be performed by highly qualified specialists working with appropriate means and, in collaboration with specialists in related disciplines: historians, anthropologists, geographers and environmental specialists. This also applies to the restoration of artifacts which is necessary in order to preserve them for future generations. We believe that the Regional Service Centres built across Canada are the only means capable of fulfilling such mission in a country whose scope and cultural diversity call for decentralization.

In summary, the cutbacks proposed by the present government will have a devastating and irreversible impact on a whole generation of researchers. Despite this anti-intellectual philosophy of a government more responsive to corporate financial powers than to private citizens, our reaction, as a group of university teachers, is based on the fact that we cannot remain silent on the damage that such a decision will have on scientists trained in our universities.

The Government of Canada must assume its responsibility as the owner of these research infrastructures and as the manager of historical sites, central parts of Canadian identity. The static management of these sites must be avoided if we are to preserve our heritage and make it known to Canadians.

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