



The Manitoba Archaeological Society

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June 12, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

The Manitoba Archaeological Society (MAS) would like to express its grave concerns with the cuts to both Parks Canada and Library and Archives Canada (LAC) as proposed in Bill C-38. The MAS is a charitable organization with over 100 members across Canada and the US. Part of our mandate is to promote the preservation, investigation and publication of archaeological information as well as to foster the study and teaching of archaeology throughout the province.

Parks Canada has a world-renowned reputation as a leading agency in heritage management, and members of the MAS were able to experience this first hand in 2010 when we hosted our annual conference at Riding Mountain National Park in conjunction with Parks Canada. Attendees were able to visit an archaeological excavation of a German PoW camp within the Park. Partnerships such as these will be a thing of the past if the cuts to Parks Canada proceed. It has been reported that the cuts to Parks Canada will, in fact be economically detrimental; in 2008-2009, Parks Canada expenditures were \$587 million but revenue was \$3.3 billion! Parks Canada will no longer be able to meet their mandate and execute their roles as outlined in their Charter when there are only 12 archaeologists and 8 conservators to support 218 national parks, historic sites and marine conservation areas. In Manitoba, programming at Riel House will be reduced and the experience of visitors will be compromised after this season since Parks Canada will no longer fund interpreters.

The cuts to LAC are equally disturbing. Coupled with the centralization of Parks Canada collections to Ottawa, the reduced hours and services as well as the elimination of the interlibrary loan program at LAC severely restricts the access everyday Canadians have to their own heritage. The proposed digitization of documents, while necessary, simply cannot be a replacement. Concerns regarding maintenance and curation of digital files alone make this unfeasible but LAC is eliminating 50% of the digitization staff meaning many documents will not be digitally available for many years.

These institutions are integral to understanding and maintaining the rich and diverse heritage of all Canadians, not just the recent events your government chooses to celebrate. It is ironic and sad that the government plans to spend an estimated \$28

million on the War of 1812 Bicentennial celebrations when the cuts to Parks Canada over the next three years are estimated to be \$29.5 million. While the War of 1812 is recognized as a pivotal event in Canadian history, the 12, 000–14, 000 years of human habitation preceding it are equally important. Archaeology is one of only a few avenues to learn about the vast majority of Canadian (pre)history and the cuts to Parks Canada severely limits our ability to discover and tell those stories. We believe that it is more important to budget \$55,135 in order to keep Riel House open for an entire season than to spend the money on 2, 250 Diamond Jubilee flags for a one day event.

It is your duty as our government to protect our national heritage, and we urge you to reconsider the extremely detrimental provisions of Bill C-38.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tomasin Playford".

Tomasin Playford
President

cc: Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment
James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada