



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

May 23, 2012

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

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) would like to express its serious concerns with the upcoming budget cuts to the Parks Canada archaeology program. These reductions in funding will have a severely negative impact on archaeological research, and seriously undermine the preservation of Canada's extensive cultural and historic resources.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in most Canadian provinces, all 50 states in the U.S., and many other nations in the Americas.

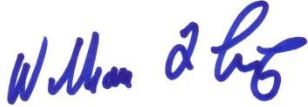
Given the state of the global economy, we acknowledge and understand the fiscal challenge the Canadian government faces, and that no category of spending is exempted from scrutiny. Nevertheless, these reductions are drastic enough to amount to a *de facto* shutdown of Parks Canada archaeology. Given the number of archaeologist, conservator, interpreter and collections manager positions proposed for elimination, it is difficult to see how Parks Canada can accomplish its mission to both educate the public and protect the nation's archaeological and cultural record.

In other places where such drastic cuts have been tried, the results have been counterproductive. For example, in California, the state laid off many of its cultural heritage specialists, experts who ensure compliance with various laws and regulations. Instead of saving money, the state inadvertently held up development permits, thereby costing itself more in business and tax revenues than it saved from the downsizing. Similarly, many states in the U.S. have had to close or greatly reduce the hours State Parks are open, hurting not just the public's opportunity to enjoy and learn their heritage, but also the surrounding businesses that depend on tourists.

Parks Canada enjoys a well-deserved global reputation as a Heritage service; a reputation reflected in the number of National Parks in Canada on the World Heritage list (and those on the proposed list). This reputation rests on the high quality of its public presentation and interpretation of Canada's cultural heritage (as at the Old Historic District at Quebec City or Heads Smashed In Buffalo Jump in Alberta), cutting edge archaeological research (as in the Gwaii Hanaas National Park and Haida Heritage Site in British Columbia) and management of places central to the history of Canada, and the Western Hemisphere (e.g. [L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site](#) in Newfoundland).

Only by funding an effective Parks Canada archaeology program can the government fulfill its responsibility to pass on the heritage of the Canadian people intact to future generations. We respectfully request that your government reconsider these cuts.

Sincerely,



William F. Limp
President

CC: Honorable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
(minister@chol.gc.ca)