



May 11, 2012

The Honorable James Moore
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Minister:

I write as president of the Society of American Archivists to express our dismay about the April 30 decision of Library and Archives Canada to eliminate both the National Archival Development Program and the Canadian Council on Archives. Despite your statements to the contrary, this decision will have far-reaching and negative effects on Canadian citizens, the archival programs that serve them, and the documentary heritage on which both rely.

The CCA has worked diligently for 26 years to create a skilled, dedicated, and cost-effective network of archives professionals. The Canadian archival community is well respected internationally, attracting top professionals and creating revenues far in excess of the \$1.7 million that is being cut.

Elimination of the NADP will have several deleterious effects on the Canadian archival community. It will cause eleven of the thirteen Provincial and Territorial Archives Councils to close within the next six months. This will eliminate training, preservation assistance, site assistance, and outreach and educational opportunities that are essential to hundreds of community archives, libraries, and museums. It will also derail a steady funding source for archival activities. NADP provided 40% of the funding (totaling \$2.5 million) for 89 projects in 2010-2011. The other 60% of the funding came from local community matches – an indication of just how successful NADP has been in leveraging community funding for needed projects. The 2012 budget narrative for the Heritage Portfolio states that it will “focus on funding that leverages contributions from partners.” Cutting the NADP clearly goes against these stated budget priorities.

The effects of these cuts on the ability of Canadians (and others) to access their documentary heritage are severe. You have gone on record as saying that the LAC is

“doing a fantastic job of digitising things.” You did not mention, however, that the NADP cuts will gut the resources – the people and the programs – actually doing this digitization. Digitization is an expensive prospect in all cases. Moreover, except in instances in which significant funding, expertise, knowledge, and technology are available, it is an inappropriate tool for preserving vulnerable materials, except by limiting access to the originals. (However, digitization does provide for a significant increase in accessibility to these materials without harming them.) Even if it were the documentary panacea you seem to believe, there is no proposed cost-effective alternative to the programs being cut. How do you propose that the digitization and actual preservation of these vulnerable materials be funded and implemented?

Methods for accessing archival records also are at risk. NADP supported the development and implementation of archivescanada.ca, the open-source portal to Canada's documentary heritage. Multiple regional portals (memorybc.ca and Archeion, for example) also were funded by NADP. The ongoing management of these systems is jeopardized, as is the ability of Canadians to access their documentary heritage.

Also of great concern is the prioritization of functions in the 2012 Heritage Portfolio. The Council for the Arts, the National Gallery, and National museums “will not see any cuts.” Although these are valuable and necessary programs, they are not archives. Many small archives across Canada will see no funding at all due to the elimination of NADP. This will directly affect the quality and diversity of Canadian archives. Research in technology, history, publishing, and a variety of personal and public initiatives relies on archives. All Canadians, and others who rely on these records, will be impoverished if these cuts in archives are made.

SAA represents more than 6,000 members overall and 126 Canadian archivists and archival institutions. As an active member of the international archival community, our organization urges you to restore funding to both the CCA and the NADP. The relatively minor investment has had significant returns for Canada and its citizens for 26 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gregor Trinkaus-Randall".

Gregor Trinkaus-Randall
President, 2011-2012