

Ms. Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
200 Sacré-Cœur Boulevard
Gatineau, QC
K1A 0H3

Mr. Daniel Watson
CEO, Parks Canada Agency
30 Victoria Street
Gatineau, QC
J8X 0B3

Dear Ms. McKenna and Mr. Watson:

I am writing to express my deep concern at the plan to close the Parks Canada Archaeology Laboratory in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and to remove its enormously important collections to a location in Gatineau.

It is impossible within the confines of a brief e-mail to capture the depth and the dimensions of the loss to Atlantic Canadian heritage that would be created by this ill-advised action. Diverse communities – Indigenous, Acadian, and others – make frequent use of the collections in their current location. The archaeological collection comprises some 1.45 million objects, which are accessed by community members and researchers in many disciplines on a regular basis. The proposed relocation will remove these precious resources from those to whom they mean the most, as well as severely eroding the region's capacity for archaeological and historical research of many kinds. Public memory, in 2017, is not only a vibrant area of research, but is also a focus of intense public discussion and debate – notably in the era following the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is an area in which we need ready access to resources, not their removal to a distant location.

I understand from media reporting (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/parks-canada-archaeology-jonathan-fowler-mi-kmaq-acadian-1.4133423>) that the removal of the laboratory is being justified by Parks Canada on the ground that the artifacts and other items can best be cared for at the Gatineau facility because of the poor state of regional repositories. Not only does this strike me as a highly questionable reason for centralization – why have some regional repositories been allowed to deteriorate? – but it is also evidently erroneous in the case of Atlantic Canada. The Dartmouth facility is only eight years old, and remains among the best state-of-the-art facilities in Canada and internationally.

Furthermore, no amount of vague promising of “innovative” ways of allowing access can possibly compensate for the loss of these invaluable collections. They belong where they are, not in Gatineau.

I trust that it is not too late for Parks Canada to revisit this regrettable decision, and in doing so to preserve the excellent Dartmouth facility while, most importantly, maintaining access for community members and researchers alike.

Yours sincerely,

John Reid

John G. Reid, FRSC
Professor of History
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, NS
B3H 3C3