



Association
of Canadian
Archivists

His Worship Mayor Bob Chiarelli
Ottawa City Hall
110 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON
K1P 1J1

February 18, 2004

Dear Mayor Chiarelli,

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) to express strong reservations regarding the proposed cutbacks to the City of Ottawa's Heritage Programming in general and the City Archives program in particular. The ACA, with headquarters in Ottawa, is a national association representing English-speaking archivists in Canada whose mission is to provide leadership and awareness of archival activities and to facilitate the understanding and appreciation of the archival heritage across the country.

The scope of the cutbacks proposed by your administration amounts to abolishing the heritage program and further reducing the resources of the already under-funded City Archives. The ACA urges you to reverse the decisions of your city managers so as to prevent severe damage to the cultural life of the city and compromise the non-renewable heritage resources now in the custody of the city's archives and museums. It is difficult to understand why the cuts to cultural and heritage programs are so out of proportion to those in other areas of the city's administration.

Records and archives are the memory of communities, and when the community is the national capital, the proper preservation of its memory is of importance not only to the citizens of Ottawa but also to the people of Canada. The city's records are evidence of accountable and democratic conduct, they preserve citizens' legal rights, and document vital corporation information resources. When the community's archives do not receive the support required to ensure long-term management and preservation of the corporation's records are placed in serious danger. The recent findings of the Auditor General of Canada with regards to the diminished level of protection of the cultural heritage of the federal government clearly demonstrates to all the results of inadequate support to archival and other heritage programs. It is to be fervently hoped that similar neglect is not repeated at the municipal level.

Reductions in the budget for the city archives over the past decade have seriously impaired that arm of your administration's ability to carry out its responsibilities. The current proposed budget reductions will only make matters worse and jeopardize the improvements called for in the Ottawa 20/20 vision, the Official Plan and the Heritage Plan. Cuts to funds means a direct loss of funding from other levels of government, but far worse is the resulting deterioration of the volunteer base on which heritage programs rely so heavily. The current proposal calling for a reduction in per capita expenditures from the already low \$3.89 to \$0.57 will shrink the city's heritage resources and activities to a near invisible level.

The ACA is not unaware of the fiscal quandary the city finds itself in, but surely a creative way can be found to resolve this dilemma without imposing such drastic measures to core functions.



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We urge you not to endanger the heritage plans adopted by Council a year ago because the citizens of Ottawa are entitled to a guarantee that their precious cultural and archival heritage is enriched and preserved for them and for future generations.

Sincerely,

J. W. O'Brien
President