

Honourable James Moore  
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages

Honourable John Baird  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

May 15, 2012

Re: Elimination of the National Archival Development Program and the Understanding Canada: Canadian Studies Program

Dear Ministers Moore and Baird,

We at the Portuguese Canadian History Project, a non-profit, volunteer-run, community outreach project, are writing to express our deep concern over the recently announced elimination of the National Archival Development Program (NADP) and the precarious future of the Young Canada Works, administered by the Canadian Council of Archives, and the Understanding Canada: Canadian Studies Program (CSP) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Although the general cuts to the Library and Archives Canada will no doubt have an adverse effect on Canada's ability to preserve the collective memory of its people and to support the historical study of our national institutions, we are most immediately troubled by how these cuts will affect these particular programs.

We have had a special relationship with the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University Libraries, since 2009. Under Michael Moir and Anna St. Onge, the Clara Thomas Archives has committed to helping us preserve and share the collective memory of Portuguese immigrants and their descendants in Canada. In order to carry out this important task, the Clara Thomas Archives has been working to catalogue and digitize the collections of important institutions like the Portuguese Canadian Democratic Association, the Portuguese Interagency Network, and the Portuguese Coalition for Better Education, to name just a few.

Despite focusing on one specific group of Canadians, our objectives are broad in scope. By preserving and increasing access to these archival and historical resources, our work has contributed towards a greater mutual understanding between Portuguese and other Canadian communities. Our efforts to promote dialogue, civic participation and social integration between Canadian communities are reflected in our sponsorship of the recently created Greek Canadian History Project, with whom we have close working ties; or in our online public history exhibits on Toronto's immigrant neighbourhoods. We have recently completed one such digital display in collaboration with St. Christopher House, one of the longest-running social service agencies and neighbourhood centres in all of Canada, where we showcase one-hundred years of an important part of Toronto's history. Many of the records we have used in our work were available to us because they had been previously preserved with the help of NADP funding to archival and community organizations, like the Clara Thomas Archives.

Due to systemic funding cuts, federal, provincial and municipal archives have been increasingly forced to narrow their focus and deal almost exclusively with the ever-expanding records produced by their respective levels of government. That means that community-based records, created by local individuals and organizations, have to rely on smaller archives like the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections to preserve these significant collections and assist in the important research done by professional scholars, students, journalists, artists, lawyers, genealogists, and everyone who seeks to learn more about themselves, their families, their neighbourhoods, their



communities, and their country. If these cuts proceed as planned, institutions like the Clara Thomas Archives will find themselves under even further pressure to meet increasing demands for knowledge-building, and will become less able to respond and benefit from the collaborative opportunities presented by community projects like ours.

For many years, Canada has enjoyed high praise as one of the leading countries in the field of information and archival sciences. Our work, which we hope will make a modest contribution to expand this reputation, has already reached an international audience of interested researchers, artists, academic and archival institutions. We have made, or are currently in the process of making, significant working connections with a number of organizations outside of Canada, including the Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese American Archives, at the University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth; and the Research Centre for Migrations and Intercultural Relations (CEMRI), at *Universidade Aberta*, in Lisbon, Portugal. Our future efforts to connect with international organizations will be greatly impaired by the fact that our potential partners will no longer be able to access the CSP funds. A good example of how these funds benefit Canadian organizations like ours is our partnership with CEMRI. The CSP funds were made available to that research centre through the Canadian Embassy in Portugal, which has allowed CEMRI to dedicate a great deal of energy to studying Canadians in Portugal and the Portuguese in Canada, as well as co-hosting a number of conferences and workshops in both countries. These venues have been instrumental in the promotion of our innovative Canadian project in Portugal and our success in establishing contacts with potential partners. With their support, we were able to connect with the State Secretary of Portuguese Communities, in the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and discuss potential funding opportunities.

Eliminating these contributions will set back efforts to reach out to communities across Canada, and will cast a significant blow to Canada's reputation as an international leader in the field of archival sciences.

As volunteer community activists and scholars, we at the Portuguese Canadian History Project, strongly encourage you to reconsider the cuts to Library and Archives Canada, to the Canadian Council of Archives' National Archival Development Program, and to the Understanding Canada: Canadian Studies Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Sincerely,

Emanuel da Silva  
Director, Portuguese Canadian History Project

Gilberto Fernandes  
Director, Portuguese Canadian History Project

Raphael Costa  
Director, Portuguese Canadian History Project

Susana Miranda  
Director, Portuguese Canadian History Project

The following organizations and individuals have added their support to the views expressed in this letter:

Avie Bennett Historica Chair in Canadian History, Prof. Marcel Martel

*Centro de Estudo das Migrações e Relações Internacionais, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal (Dr. João Sardinha, Coordinator)*

Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University Libraries (Anna St. Onge, Archivist, Digital Projects and Outreach)

Department of History, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University (Chair, Prof. Jonathan Edmondson)

cc:

Federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, the Honourable Jason Kenney

Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Charles Sousa

The Member of Parliament for Davenport, Andrew Cash

The Member of Parliament for St. Paul's, Carolyn Bennett

The Member of Parliament for Etobicoke North, Kirsty Duncan

The Member of Parliament for York Centre, Mark Adler

The Member of Parliament for Trinity-Spadina, Olivia Chow