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CANADIAN HERITAGE  
Parks Canada—  
Rocky Mountain House Historic Site

Question by

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Thursday, November 29, 2012

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[Translation]

### CANADIAN HERITAGE

#### PARKS CANADA— ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE HISTORIC SITE

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** Honourable senators, last Tuesday we celebrated Canadian Museums Day. Unfortunately, this was not a day of celebration for many of our museums and historic sites.

As you no doubt know, the massive cuts of close to \$30 million imposed on Parks Canada dealt a direct blow to some historic sites across Canada. I recently received a letter from one of the affected sites, the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site. The site, which is located in Alberta, protects the archaeological remains of four trading posts while presenting the site's history.

I would like to quote the letter from Shirley Evans, President of the Confluence Heritage Society, which takes care of most of this historic site's operations. It reads:

[English]

The Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site, much to our dismay, was one of the sites which were chosen to become self-guided. We do not know what criteria were applied to select our site, in fact, the only criteria mentioned by Parks Canada in press releases involved canals and declining attendance and neither of these applies to us. We live in an area where there are many Aboriginal people who rely strongly on oral tradition; therefore self-guided has little or no value to them.

[Translation]

Honourable senators, can the minister tell us what criteria were used to determine that the Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site would have to put an end to its interpretation services?

[English]

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I thank the honourable senator for the

question. It is a fact that no other government has done more when it comes to the protection and promotion of our national parks. We have increased Parks Canada's budget by \$50 million since 2006. We have set aside protected parklands and areas the size of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. combined. National parks and historic sites will remain open this winter, and I am informed that Parks Canada is working with volunteer organizations to provide assistance and equipment for ski tracking and other trails through various parks.

With regard to Rocky Mountain House, I specifically will take that question as notice and respond by written response in respect of deliberations that have taken place between Parks Canada and that particular site.

**Senator Tardif:** I appreciate the leader checking into this. I would only say that approximately 3,000 students per year visit the Rocky Mountain House site. These students pay fees for guided tours. Not only will Alberta schools no longer have access to tours at the site, but the lost earnings for the Rocky Mountain House site will be substantial. We have to understand that we must support culture, not only in our nation's capital but also in communities across Canada.

Honourable senators, I ask the minister how cutting back a small site that is closely involved with the local community, and which has been pretty much gutted in the last years, makes any difference to the federal budget?

**Senator LeBreton:** I just pointed out that the federal government's budgeted allocation has increased massively for Parks Canada. Obviously Parks Canada, with the additional monies they have been provided, has been working to ensure that Canadians have access to the historic sites across the country.

With regard to a specific decision by Parks Canada in the case of Rocky Mountain House, I indicated that I would ask for specific information about Rocky Mountain House. However, I do not think there is any denying the fact that this government has invested a lot in our history, culture and heritage. We have invested a lot in Parks Canada. Parks Canada has done an incredible job of providing access to our parks and historic sites. I cannot specifically address the one that the honourable senator raises in relation to Rocky Mountain House but, as I indicated, I will make an inquiry.