

NewsRelease



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Federal Program Reviews Mean Layoffs and Downgraded Services at the National Gallery of Canada

OTTAWA - Jobs will be lost and corners will be cut at the National Gallery of Canada as a result of the federal government's revolving "strategic review" of program spending in targeted departments and agencies across the federal government.

Selected to undergo a review in 2007 along with 16 other departments and agencies, the National Gallery was directed to cut its budget by five per cent.

Where the recent federal budget released in February referred to "better use of internal resources and administrative efficiencies" in the museums sector, the plain truth was announced by the Director of the National Gallery on April 3 when he announced 10 job cuts, including five layoffs – one of those to a senior paper conservator with more than 25 years of service. Among those laid off are three members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) and one member of the Professional Institute of Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

Director Pierre Thèberge also said the five per cent cut dictated by the strategic review process will necessitate other cuts that will have an impact on the Gallery's publishing and marketing capacity. Events and exhibitions will have to be scaled back and training will also have to be curtailed, according to Thèberge.

Reaction to the cuts, and in particular to the position of the senior paper conservator, has been swift. Numerous letters to Thèberge from senior gallery staff, trustees and conservators say the cuts call into question the gallery's commitment and its ability to fulfill its mandate to expand and conserve its extensive collections.

PSAC is currently considering a range of actions in response to the employer's actions.

Ed Cashman, PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President for the National Capital Region, is also speaking out against the cuts. "These cuts will not only hinder the Gallery's ability to carry out its mandate, they will also have a significant impact on smaller museums across the country that rely on the gallery's collections to draw visitors into their facilities. Here is yet another example of the shortsightedness of the Harper government and its callous disregard for our vital cultural heritage."

The federal government has announced that it intends to carry out further program spending reviews in 16 more departments and agencies. The PSAC has stressed with Treasury Board the need for consultation on the conduct of these program reviews and the Union will be monitoring these reviews and responding to any possible impacts on PSAC members.

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