



Letter to the Editor
The Toronto Star
One Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario, M5E 1E6

August 18, 2006

Re: Archives declining as search for home continues, Ian Urquhart, August 14

Dear Sir:

I was dismayed to read Ian Urquhart's August 14 article, "Archives declining as search for home continues."

The Archives of Ontario is a cornerstone of democracy in Canada's most populous province. The institution plays an integral role in satisfying legal requirements prescribed by the Ontario government in the *Archives Act* and by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. These statutes require provincial ministries, departments, and branches of the public service to retain and to preserve public records in a secure and accessible manner. In fulfilling these statutory obligations, the Archives of Ontario supports the rights of citizens and ensures public accountability. By preserving and granting access to public records, the Archives of Ontario provides evidence of the decisions, policies, and activities of the Government of Ontario and its agencies, boards, and commissions.

Further, for more than a century, the Archives of Ontario has been a vital component of the province's cultural and educational life. The Archives is the custodian of the largest and finest collection of Ontario's documentary heritage in existence. This documentary resource contributes significantly to our understanding of the development of the province, its natural and built environment, and the people who lived, worked, or had an impact upon Ontario. It is an irreplaceable historical legacy that must be preserved for future generations. Clearly, the Archives of Ontario is an institution that demands the solid support of Ontario's government.

However, it is well known that the Archives of Ontario's existing facility is stretched to capacity and is subject to the risks of inadequate fire protection and of mould infestation. A new facility is long overdue and years of planning have gone toward a move. The modest investment needed to secure for the Archives an up-to-date facility in an accessible Toronto location represents excellent value for public money. Sir Arthur Doughty, Dominion Archivist of Canada from 1904-1935, wrote: "Of all national assets, archives are the most precious; they are the gifts of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization." What does the failure of this Government to safeguard the documentary heritage of the province say about Ontario's legacy to future generations?



On behalf of the members of Association of Canadian Archivists Association, I urge the Ontario government to find an accessible and centrally located up-to-date facility for the Archives of Ontario. The Archives of Ontario supports the province's democratic, cultural and educational endeavours. It deserves the appropriate facilities to sustain this work; anything less would be an abdication of the Government of Ontario's responsibility to preserve and to protect Ontario's collective memory.

Sincerely,



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