

**25TH ANNIVERSARY IMPACT REPORT**



**25 YEARS**

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**25 years of sharing history,  
75 feet underground**

**DIEFENBUNKER: CANADA'S COLD WAR MUSEUM | 1998-2023**

## A Message from Our Executive Director and Our Board Chair

Today, the Diefenbunker has been a museum for almost as long as it served as an operational military base and the potential emergency seat of government in the event of a nuclear war. Our goal as a museum is to expand critical understanding of the Cold War through exhibitions, programs, events, and publications. This year, as we celebrate 25 years as Canada's Cold War Museum, the world seems to need our messages about conflict resolution and the continuity of government more than ever.

Our anniversary highlights how much we have grown — and how much we have to celebrate! We are a museum and national historic site, conserving and interpreting a unique building with a remarkable story. We are leaders in the museum field, paving the way with our site preservation initiatives, an immersive educational platform, diverse revenue streams, and community collaborations. Our future is bright.

We began on a shoestring, led by a group of hardy volunteers with a vision. They knew then, as we know now, that the bunker had a history worth saving. Through the years, we have built on our successes, carefully marshalling our resources to preserve this country's most significant Cold War artifact. We found new opportunities and resources in a shifting cultural landscape; built our communities locally, nationally, and internationally; educated generations of students and families; and trained wave after wave of young museum professionals. We have contributed to the world's understanding of Canada's role in the Cold War while, closer to home, emerging as a driver of culture and the economy for our region.

Aided by a long line of forward-thinking leaders who lay down our foundations, we have a solid footing — 75 feet underground.

This report is more than a collection of inspirational quotes and hard numbers. It is evidence of progress and a declaration of continued intent, based on a quarter century of hard work. Thumbing these pages, you'll witness our humble beginnings, journey through our strategic growth, and follow our mission to reveal and relate a historical moment of crisis to today's troubled world.

Even as we celebrate our success, we know the world is once again facing ideological and political tensions. Canadians need examples of how international diplomacy can defuse conflicts. Of how people, working together, can overcome differences. We thrive as a safe place in which to learn from the past. A place central to our community. A place that invites us to remember, appreciate, and reflect.



**Christine McGuire**  
Executive Director



**Susan McLeod**  
Chair, Board of Directors

### We value the fact that history happened here.

For 25 years, we have proudly offered an immersive look into the past by preserving and promoting Canada's Cold War artifacts and stories.

We strive to showcase new and engaging connections to history so that present and future generations can better understand the Cold War and take away lessons for the future.

**“There is nothing like the Diefenbunker out there and I will never forget the first time I walked through the doors, down the Blast Tunnel, and entered a little slice of the past. A truly unique and life-changing experience underground.”**

Former volunteer, 2023

**“We appreciate the intrinsic value of this remarkable site, bringing to life the realities of the Cold War in Canada. I encourage locals and tourists to Ottawa alike to visit this unique historic site.”**

The Honourable Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, 2020

*The Diefenbunker was built on the traditional unceded, unsundered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial. The Diefenbunker museum acknowledges the adverse impacts of the Cold War and its ongoing legacy of harm to Indigenous peoples in Canada. The museum is continually working to develop collaborative relationships with Indigenous communities and to ensure respectful interpretation of Indigenous content in our spaces.*

# THE DIEFENBUNKER THROUGH THE DECADES

## 1959–1961

- Central Emergency Government Headquarters (CEGHQ) is constructed in Carp, Ontario.

## 1994–1997

- The property is sold to the Township of West Carleton. A group of local volunteers steps forward to preserve the building and open it as a museum.

## 1961–1994

- The site operates as Experimental Army Signals Establishment (EASE). It is later redesignated as Canadian Forces Station (CFS) Carp.

## 1998

- The Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum is federally incorporated as a registered charity.
- June 27: The museum officially opens. Parks Canada and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada unveil the Diefenbunker's plaque.

## 1998–early 2000s

- New volunteers and staff join the team and tackle operations, collections management, research, exhibitions, programming, marketing, and governance.
- The Diefenbunker receives original artifacts saved from the decommissioned site by the Canadian War Museum, including the scale model of the bunker and the CBC Studio contents.
- Original documents and artifacts, along with other items from the Cold War era to help reconstruct areas of the bunker, are acquired from private donors, Crown Assets, and other military facilities.

## 2006

- The first Spy Camp is offered.

## 2007

- With Parks Canada, the museum develops a Commemorative Integrity Statement to describe benchmarks for managing and operating the national historic site.

## 1994

- CEGHQ, or “the Diefenbunker,” is designated a national historic site, in recognition of its significance as Canada's most important surviving Cold War artifact and its unique underground construction.
- The Department of National Defence decommissions the Diefenbunker following the end of the Cold War and empties the building.

## 2003

- The museum's Cold War research library is established.

## 2008

- The museum celebrates its 10th anniversary, with the theme of “enduring relevance.”

## Honouring Our Beginnings

We acknowledge all the individuals who served important roles in the founding and early years of the Diefenbunker. Without their vision, hard work, and tenacity, the Diefenbunker and its place in history would be long forgotten.

“Our lives are enriched when we value and preserve key examples of our heritage. With today's ceremony, the Diefenbunker becomes one more jewel in the chain of more than 1,000 national historic sites across the country. The Diefenbunker represents an important era in the development and expansion of Canadian society.”

The Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Parks Canada), opening day speech, 1998

# THE DIEFENBUNKER THROUGH THE DECADES

“The Diefenbunker is a world-renowned museum that attracts thousands of visitors each year. The Government of Canada is supporting necessary infrastructure upgrades to enhance accessibility as well as upgrades to service offerings, both of which will improve the visitor experience at this public space and continue to drive tourism in the Ottawa area.”

MP Jenna Sudds, 2022

## 2010

- Museum capacity increases from 60 to 420 visitors following a fire and emergency systems retrofit, allowing for self-guided tours and larger groups. Grants and donations for this capital project total \$1.65 million.

## 2013

- With Canadian Heritage funding, the Bank of Canada Vault is retrofitted to serve as a multipurpose programming space.
- The museum receives *Where* magazine's Best New Summer Attractions in Canada Award.

## 2016

- The museum launches *Escape the Diefenbunker*, in partnership with *Escape Manor*.
- The Government of Canada and the City of Ottawa fund rehabilitation of the Guard House.
- An iconic fundraising campaign to repair original toilet plumbing gathers much media attention.

## 2020

- The Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario invest \$1.1 million in infrastructure and building improvements for new mechanical, plumbing, and ventilation systems.
- Funded by the Canadian Experiences Fund, the Diefenbunker introduces new bilingual interpretive panels and accessible wayfinding signage, along with a multilingual Audio Guide. This visitor experience enhancement initiative earns a 2021 Ontario Museum Association Award of Excellence.

## 2011

- The Diefenbunker joins the Ottawa Museum Network.
- Oral histories of former CFS Carp employees are documented.

## 2014

- The Diefenbunker launches:
  - Conflict Resolution Workshops, funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation
  - An Artist-in-Residence Program
  - A new, bilingual website
- The *Amazing Race Canada* features the museum as a stop in its finale.

## 2018

- Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the museum presents a new logo.

## 2021

- The museum installs Wi-Fi underground.

## 2012

- An Alumni Association is established for military and civilian personnel who served at the Diefenbunker or in associated facilities.

## 2015

- The Conflict Resolution Workshops win an Ontario Museum Association Award of Excellence in Programs.
- The museum transitions internal documentation of its collections and archives to a central database with the City of Ottawa.

## 2019

- An introductory exhibit is added to the Butler Hut, setting the scene for visitors entering the museum.
- The Welcome Desk area is retrofitted to mimic the original Master Control Centre.
- The museum's new Gift Shop opens.

## 2022-2023

- With an investment from FedDev Ontario, the museum produces two new permanent exhibitions, an outdoor Interpretive Trail, and a virtual reality experience, and upgrades lighting for improved accessibility and energy efficiency.

Our official Parks Canada designation as a national historic site gives the Diefenbunker greater recognition for the importance of the site to our history and the need to protect it. The Diefenbunker upholds the heritage values that merit this status and safeguards the site's Cold War history, while using its platform as a museum to facilitate research and educate the public about this period of history.

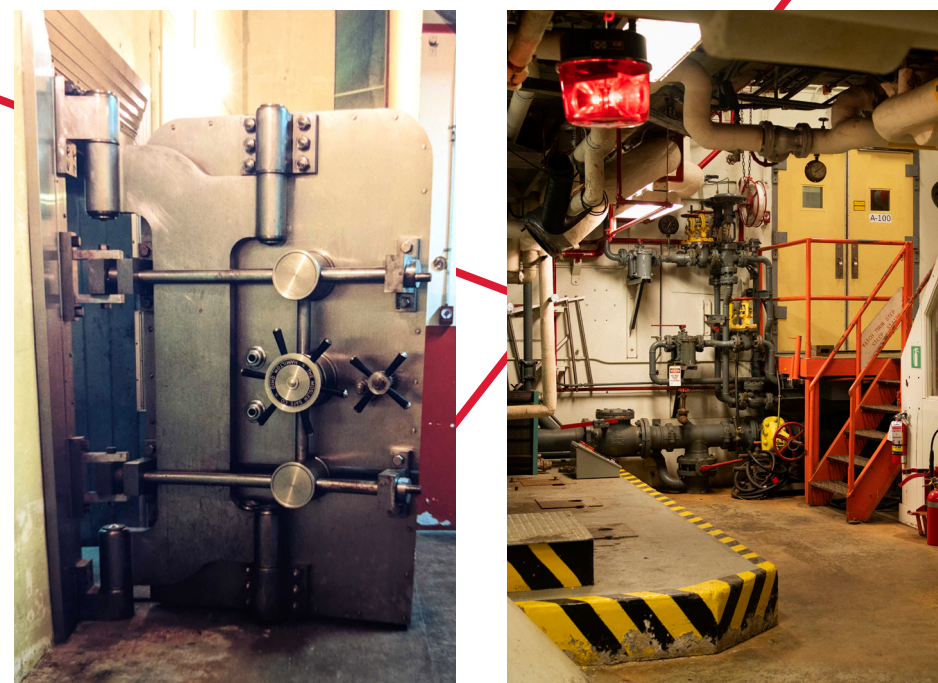
Donations and acquisitions help us to document and preserve the history of the site and aspects of relevant military, government, and civilian life in Canada during the Cold War. The artifacts in our collections allow us to provide meaningful historical interpretation and to recreate components of the site to take visitors back in time.

### Embracing our dual mandate

- As a **national historic site**, we care for artifacts and stories from the past
- As a **museum**, we can connect the past to our present and future

### Crucial infrastructure improvements

- Significant capital funding has allowed us to continually upgrade the bunker's aging infrastructure to keep the site functioning and to accommodate visitors, while maintaining the site's historical integrity



**11,000+**

items make up our collections and archives

**2,700+** 3-D artifacts such as technology, household goods, and building components

**8,300+** 2-D artifacts such as photographs, maps, documents, blueprints, and video materials



**5,000+** books, periodicals, and magazines fill our library



**19** oral histories recorded

“Our family visits the Diefenbunker to feel a little bit closer to and remember my Poppy who worked on the Avro Arrow project. He proudly brought us grandkids here on many trips over the years. Now, we continue to bring the next generations to learn about their great-grandpa.”

Visitor, 2023

In-depth accounts from former CFS Carp personnel give us first-hand perspectives on work and life in the Diefenbunker.

### ORAL HISTORIES



The Diefenbunker tells the story of Canada's resourcefulness, preparedness, and extraordinary efforts to safeguard our way of life in the face of a nuclear catastrophe. The museum has a crucial role to play in helping us to understand our past and envision a more peaceful future. Award-winning educational programs, immersive exhibitions, and academic collaborations exemplify our meaningful platform for experiential learning, communication, and connection as we provide future generations with important lessons from the Cold War.



11,500+ students have engaged in our educational programs



Free online resources

- Virtual Tours
- Multilingual Audio Guide
- Virtual exhibitions
- Cold War research
- Informative blog posts
- Family-friendly activities



6 million+ views of our website



28,000+ views of our Virtual Tours



8,000+ plays of our Audio Guide

Hub for research and academic collaboration

- Numerous symposiums, conferences, and research projects take place at the Diefenbunker or use materials from our collections, library, and archives



Insightful exhibitions

- Permanent and temporary exhibitions incorporate storytelling, artifacts, photographs, videos, and interactives
- Wide-ranging topics touch on archaeology, atomic bombs, engineering, geopolitics, peacebuilding, pop culture, propaganda, and visual arts



"It is unique to feel you are walking through such a secretive, fascinating part of history instead of just reading about it. Extremely well done!"

Visitor, 2023

"Our government supports iconic, world-renowned Canadian museums like the Diefenbunker. Their fantastic exhibits and commitment to knowledge are the reasons why they continue to attract thousands of visitors each year."

The Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, 2023



The Diefenbunker engages a diversity of visitors through its varied offerings, events, and experiences throughout the year. There is something for everyone — families and young kids, those nostalgic for the Cold War, students and history buffs keen to learn something new, and locals or tourists in search of a unique outing. Our strong connection to local communities brings people back to the Diefenbunker year after year.



**30 to 80** volunteers contribute their time and skills each year

**Hundreds of themed special events**

- Recognize annual dates of significance and holidays
- Provide family-friendly activities, artistic performances, book and film discussions, lectures, and fundraisers

**We participate in community and city-wide events**



**9 Artists-in-Residence** have engaged arts communities and explored new mediums and perspectives

**Award-winning partnership**

- Offered in partnership with Escape Manor, Escape the Diefenbunker remains one of our most popular offerings

**2** escape rooms

**3** awards received in the inaugural year of the program

**We are an active member of heritage and tourism organizations**

**3** regional

**4** provincial

**2** national



**We support local organizations and charitable fundraisers**



“Living near the Diefenbunker, you’d think we’d visit just once ... However, it has become a staple in our events, as there’s always something more to see when you visit, and they offer amazing programs. Our oldest son has been attending Summer Spy Camp for years. He’s always excited for it, to see what Agent X has done this time, and to find new challenges. Each year he learns new things, and the staff are absolutely amazing. Both in camps and other roles, the staff are passionate about the museum and their programs!”

Visitor and program participant, 2023

“I’ve been volunteering at the Diefenbunker for over twenty years now. It’s a great opportunity to work and play with likeminded people who have a passion for what they do. As one of the guides, I particularly enjoy sharing this unique part of Canada’s Cold War history with visitors and introducing them to the wonders of radio.”

Volunteer Brian Jeffrey, 2020

Museums and cultural heritage attractions boost tourism, provide employment opportunities, and benefit local economies. With increasing attendance over the last 25 years, the Diefenbunker is an important driver for tourism and the economy in rural West Ottawa.

The museum:

- **Brings in tourists** to the Village of Carp and surrounding areas to spend time experiencing other local attractions, restaurants, and retail, helping to create a more vibrant social and economic landscape
- **Supports local hotel and catering businesses** by hosting conferences with delegates from across the province and country, as well as by welcoming business, film, and wedding rentals
- **Provides employment** for local residents, particularly high school and university students seeking summer employment, and attracts new graduates and experienced professionals from other cities



**907,000+** visitors have passed through the Blast Tunnel since 1998, from all across Canada and around the world

**1 in 3** visitors were from outside Ontario in 2022

History happened here at the Diefenbunker in our lifetime — for 32 years, it was home to crucial Cold War operations making history, and for another 25 years, it has offered a glimpse into the past and brought that history to life. This one bunker has held decades of Canadian history and thousands of visitors, and has borne witness to countless stories, memories, and transformational experiences.

These are the successes we will build upon in the next 25 years. We continue to lead in the museum landscape, as we grow our organization through strategic decision-making and thrive as an important historical, cultural, and tourist destination. Amid rising global tensions, our important messages of preparedness and peacebuilding are increasingly relevant, and the Cold War stories told within our walls resonate now more than ever. The bunker has already been preserved and maintained long past its original life expectancy, and we endeavour to continue safeguarding this unique piece of Canadian history that stands as a testament to the important role that Canada played during the Cold War.

We are truly one-of-a-kind. The light at the end of the Blast Tunnel remains bright for our future. We are grateful to all the visitors, donors, partners, funders, and community supporters who have allowed us to preserve this window into the past and share important lessons for future generations. We hope you will join us on our journey through the next 25 years.



**75%** of our operating revenue comes from public admissions to our tours, events, and programs



**\$1.6 billion** in total economic value is contributed by museums in Ontario annually

(Source: Ontario Museum Association, 2020)



**“Tourism is a strong economic driver for Carp. In particular, visitors come from far and wide to experience Canada’s history at the Diefenbunker.”**

Karen McCrimmon, Former Member of Parliament for Kanata—Carleton, 2021





# Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum

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