



Towards a Revitalized National Museums Policy

Recommendations from the Canadian Museums Association

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Submitted by: Canadian Museums Association (CMA)

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Executive Summary

As an advocate and representative for museums across Canada, the Canadian Museums Association (hereafter CMA) is dedicated to shaping a future where these institutions flourish as inclusive platforms for dialogue, education, Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and community building. As we look towards the future, we envisage a National Museums Policy (NMP) that embodies this vision – promoting sustainability, fostering inclusivity, healing the wounds of the past and present, and recognizing the significant societal and economic contributions of museum sector.

Our expectations from the revised NMP, as laid out in this brief, are for a policy that responds to the needs of our diverse community and embraces the transformative potential of museums in the 21st century that implement the principles outlined in UNDRIP. This document encapsulates our aspirations and hopes for a new era in Canada's museum history and lays the groundwork for meaningful policy development and implementation.

Introduction to the CMA

Founded in 1947, the CMA (Association des musées canadiens, AMC) is a nationwide, non-profit organization committed to the advancement of museums across Canada. It serves as a representative for Canadian museum professionals domestically and globally. Much like other professional associations, it is dedicated to bolstering the recognition, growth, and stability of its sector. The CMA team offers its nearly 2,000 members a wealth of resources, including conferences, publications, and opportunities for networking.

The CMA's membership is diverse, encompassing national museums, non-profit museums, art galleries, science centers, aquariums, archives, sports halls-of-fame, artist-run centers, zoos, and historic sites spread throughout Canada. These institutions vary in size from large metropolitan galleries to small community museums.

The Need for A New National Museums Policy

An NMP plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's museum sector. This strategic blueprint bolsters the sustainability and societal impact of museums, key cultural institutions that serve multiple roles. Now, more than ever, there is an urgent call for a reinvigorated NMP in Canada, one that addresses contemporary societal demands, including the imperative process of Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and acknowledges the substantial economic contribution of the sector.

Canadian museums contribute significantly to our economy. As shown by the Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions (2019), museums and galleries alone generated over \$1.6 billion¹ in revenue in 2017, with over 49.3 million physical visits and 173 million online visits. A Value Study of GLAMs (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) in Canada further shows that the sector yields nearly \$8.6 billion² annually in economic benefits. Despite this enormous contribution, research by the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) suggests that as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), heritage spending is lower now than it was in

¹ "Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2019 Report," last modified 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/general-publications/about-survey-heritage-institutions/2019-report.html>

² Study: Value of GLAMs in Canada 2020," Canadian Museums Association, accessed June 13, 2023, <https://museums.ca/site/reportsandpublications/studyglamscanada2020>

1972 (see Table A in the Appendix). Moreover, while PCH continues to administer the oversubscribed Museums Assistance Program (MAP), its consistent funding of approximately \$6.7 million in nominal terms between 1990 and the present day translates into an effective 80% decrease in real-value support.

A fragmented and unpredictable funding landscape often impedes the development of evidence-based policymaking. A comprehensive NMP could streamline funding, making it more accessible and consistent, and thus bolster the sector's financial sustainability.

The NMP also serves a vital political function. The present socio-political landscape in Canada, grappling with challenges such as Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, climate change, and disruptive technological changes, mirrors the turbulence of the late 1960s. Like then, our society is looking to articulate a new identity amidst geopolitical unrest. Now, as then, museums can provide platforms for reflection, inquiry, and debate to resolve some of these challenges, helping to heal our nation and alleviate socio-political tensions.

Reconciliation with Indigenous communities is a pressing priority, and museums have a unique role to play in this process. The CMA's *Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canada* report identified ten recommendations³ for the museum sector, including the development of strong legislation to repatriate Indigenous belongings. An NMP that enables the implementation of these ten recommendations would serve as a force-multiplier for the sector's efforts towards supporting Indigenous self-determination in the heritage sector.

Internationally, countries like France and Scotland exemplify the effectiveness of robust museum policies. France benefits from a ministry of culture that has unified, protected, and guided the museum sector with extensive policies⁴ covering various activities and responsibilities. On the other hand, Scotland has opted for a high-level vision⁵ for its museums, aligning with the government's ambitious national programs. These varied approaches underscore the adaptability of museum policies to local contexts, illustrating the potential for Canada to formulate an NMP that addresses its unique challenges and opportunities.

In conclusion, a revitalized NMP is not just desirable but essential. It is an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate leadership in addressing critical societal issues, bolster the economic value and societal impact of museums, and contribute to the unity, understanding, and progress of the nation. Given the seismic changes since the last update over 30 years ago, our museums and our society need a policy that is a true reflection of contemporary, diverse, and evolving Canada. Now is the time to seize the opportunity and forge a path for a more resilient, inclusive, and impactful museum sector.

³ "Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian museums," Canadian Museums Association, accessed June 13, 2023, https://museums.ca/uploaded/web/TRC_2022/Report-CMA-MovedToAction.pdf

⁴ Ministry of Culture, France, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Thematic/Museums>

⁵ "Scotland's Museums and Galleries Strategy 2023-2030," accessed June 19, 2023, <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/strategy/scotlands-museums-and-galleries-strategy/>

Recommendations

The CMA proposes a set of key recommendations for the consideration of PCH. These recommendations, developed after comprehensive study and reflection, as well as through an exchange of views with the sector and allied organizations, aim to address the sector's existing challenges. They provide a roadmap for enhancing the role of museums in Canadian society, strengthening their financial sustainability, and reinforcing their commitment to support for Indigenous self-determination, diversity, and inclusion. By implementing these recommendations, we believe a transformative, revitalized NMP can be achieved, setting the stage for a resilient, inclusive, and impactful museum sector in Canada:

- ❖ **Redefinition of Museums:** The Canadian Museums Association (CMA) advocates for an expanded definition of museums that is more inclusive and reflective of diverse organizations engaged in cultural, historical, and scientific heritage preservation. This would allow more institutions, especially those serving marginalized communities, to access governmental funds and participate in broader dialogues about museums in Canada.
 - The inclusion of non-traditional heritage organizations is particularly pertinent to foster a diverse and representative sector.
- ❖ **Transformation and Sustainability of Funding Structures:** The CMA underscores the need to revise existing funding structures, transitioning from project-centric funding to models that prioritize operational and long-term sustainable financing.
 - There is a critical need for inflation-indexed funding to address rising operational, maintenance, and programming costs. This would ensure the long-term financial stability of these institutions. Additionally, we recommend streamlining the funding process to make it more efficient and user-friendly, thereby easing the financial management burden and capacity issues on these institutions.
 - The encouragement of philanthropy, balanced against the potential for misalignment with museum missions, could be addressed through tax incentives for donations and guidance on supporting mission alignment during philanthropic engagements. This should aim to plug the gap in incentives between the federal and provincial/territorial level.
 - Furthermore, funding structures should be adjusted to incentivize collaboration among heritage institutions, allowing for collective advancement and the sharing of resources. For example, the 2018 report on museums by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommended that PCH create an incentive to encourage museums to pool resources and physical infrastructure, in areas such as storage facilities, marketing plans, insurance policies and other expenses.⁶ Support for museums would also be enhanced by considering the creation of a dedicated Crown corporation like the Canada Council of the Arts (Canada Council for Heritage?) to support the sector and administer programs.
- ❖ **Modernization and Sustainability of Collection Practices:** The CMA calls attention to the need for a comprehensive re-evaluation of collection practices in alignment with principles of environmental sustainability, changing demographic landscapes, and support for Indigenous self-determination and compliance with UNDRIP.
 - This includes support for sustainable, inclusive, and forward-thinking approaches to collections management.

⁶ "Moving Forward: Towards a Stronger Canadian Museum Sector: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, September 2018, [chpcrp12-e.pdf \(ourcommons.ca\)](#)

- Support for Indigenous rights holders to access and steward belongings and support for museums to facilitate collections review and access in consultation with rights holders.
- Preservation and bio-banking for biodiversity conservation necessitate close collaboration with governmental bodies and Indigenous communities, which should be actively fostered and supported.
- ❖ **Strengthening Community Engagement and Diversity:** The CMA stresses the importance of more comprehensive representation of societal diversity within museums and increased community engagement.
 - Policies should be designed to foster community involvement, ensuring heritage organizations become more engaged, diverse, and service-oriented.
 - Additional support for smaller museums and collections is vital to improve their ability to manage and interpret collections, engage with their communities effectively, and encourage diversity.
- ❖ **Acknowledgement of the Social Role of Museums:** The CMA emphasizes the need for policy measures to acknowledge the critical roles museums play in public engagement, education, mental health, and social cohesion.
 - Museums must be recognized as crucial tools for social cohesion and public service entities, with funding structures reflecting this important social role.
- ❖ **Indigenous Self-Determination, Consultation, and Repatriation:** The CMA identifies a significant need for support for Indigenous self-determination, centered around the UNDRIP principles, and the recommendations of the Moved to Action report. Please see the full submission from the CMA Reconciliation Council, submitted separately from this brief.
 - Centre and prioritize Indigenous self-determination throughout the NMP in the principles and objectives down through its programming goals.
 - Include mechanisms for proactive, ongoing, and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Indigenous communities and rights holders in each area where the policy connects to and affects them, for the full duration of the life of the policy
 - Encompass an expansive definition of heritage to include Indigenous considerations around how heritage and culture is tied to land, language, spirituality, and ceremony, as well as includes tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
 - Invest capacity in Indigenous communities in a manner that is flexible and responsive, with an ability to adapt, change and make space for Indigenous authority over the work that it supports, including through expanded funding mechanisms.
 - Encourage support for revenue-sharing arrangements between institutions and Indigenous nations from whose intellectual property, collections, knowledge, exhibits and programming they benefit.
 - Implement an Indigenous-led federal framework for repatriation to set a standard for the repatriation processes across the country, prioritizing the needs identified by Indigenous rights holders.
 - Support for revitalized collections management that enables access to and stewardship of collections, as well as provides for consultations for parameters around access, including digitization initiatives.
 - Support for a national UNDRIP professional development strategy for museum professionals.
 - Sustainable and Equitable Practices: To ensure sustainability and equitability, programmatic changes and dedicated funding need to be introduced.
 - Climate Change Mitigation: Introduce programs that cover costs of retrofitting to ensure museums become resilient against natural disasters and other climate change-related catastrophes.

- Combatting Systemic Racism and Disinformation: Enhance programs that allow museums to partner in delivering sustainable and equitable solutions to systemic racism and disinformation campaigns.
- ❖ **Implementation of Key Report Recommendations:** The CMA insists that recommendations and actions from key reports, such as the Moved to Action report and the Steering Committee on Canada's Archives' response to the TRC, must be fully implemented to address the prevalent issues in the museum sector.
- ❖ **Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** The CMA identifies a significant need for diversity, equity, and inclusion across museum infrastructures, organizational teams, and audiences.
 - Initiatives to address pay inequity, promote diversity on boards, and improve the representation of marginalized communities in the narrative and administration of museums are needed. A more equitable, diverse, and inclusive museum sector should not only be a goal but a standard.
 - Education and training programs are essential to foster diversity and inclusivity outcomes in museums and heritage organizations. These programs should focus on bias, micro-aggressions, systemic racism, and cultural competency among other topics.
- ❖ **Accessibility and Inclusion:** There's a clear need for increased funding to address barriers to hiring equity-deserving individuals, particularly for smaller museums.
 - Adjustments: Introduce funding for museums less dependent on youth-oriented programs with limited flexibility regarding age caps (e.g., YCW, CSJ). Consider a pilot investment of \$400,000 to support older emerging museum professionals should be considered.
 - Mentorship: Develop mentorship programs for equity-deserving communities to build their skillsets in the heritage sector.
 - Increased Operational Support for Museum Employment: To ensure the stability of the YCW program, where demand from the sector exceeds the available funding, the incorporation of supplemental funding amounts of \$3.3 million annually earmarked for museums into core funding.
- ❖ **Decentralization and Regional Support:** Programs to support the decentralization of collections and greater support for collections of smaller museums and collections facilities in remote regions are necessary.
 - Regional Specific Support: Ensure that PCH support is region-specific to consider the complexity of each province and territory's Reconciliation and repatriation work.
 - Collections Management: Develop a national strategy for collections management and access, which includes training in repatriation and regional sensitivity.
- ❖ **Sector Synergy:** Enhance programs like the Canadian Experiences Fund, Destination Canada, and Canada Culture Spaces Fund to leverage synergy between the heritage sector and other sectors of the economy such as tourism.
- ❖ **International Relations and Advocacy:** Lastly, the CMA encourages greater international collaboration, reciprocity, and exchange in the heritage sector.
 - Efforts to facilitate international touring exhibitions and loans, cultural exchanges, and collaboration can enhance Canada's position in the global heritage community.
 - Furthermore, advocacy work on the return of cultural objects from international institutions should be supported.

In conclusion, the CMA strongly believes that these issues should be the focus of the new National Museums Policy. It urges PCH and the forthcoming NMP to address these critical matters and is ready to assist in this monumental task of revitalizing Canada's museum and heritage sector.

Conclusion

Through this submission, the CMA would like to re-emphasize that a comprehensive, forward-thinking NMP is a necessity rather than a luxury in our diverse and evolving society. Our vision for the future is one where museums in Canada are not merely repositories of the past, but dynamic institutions at the heart of social dialogue, economic development, Reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and cultural understanding. It is our belief that with the collective action of all stakeholders and the implementation of the recommendations put forth in this document, we can establish an NMP that empowers museums, aligns with contemporary societal expectations of the heritage sector, and secures its long-term sustainability.

The journey towards this goal begins now. Let us seize this opportunity and together, build a future where the transformative power of museums is fully realized.

Appendix

Table A - Programs and Funding for Canada's Museum Sector: A Comparison

| Year | 1972 | 1990 | 2022 |
|----------|---|---|---|
| Policy | National Museum Policy | Canadian Museum Policy | - |
| Programs | <p>Museum Assistance Program (MAP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Museums – funding for network of museums demonstrating “regional initiative.” • Exhibition Centres - to enable institutions to form a complementary network to Associate Museums and display National Museums’ collections. • Training Assistance – funds to increase training for museum sector workers. • National Loan Collection – funds to support collection of materials designed for public use in non-museum situations. • Emergency Purchase Fund - fund to purchase nationally significant materials at risk of being sold abroad. • Museumobiles – Traveling museums on wheels. <p>Canada Conservation Institute (CCI) – five planned regional conservation laboratories with headquarters in Ottawa, for the restoration of works in urgent need of attention.</p> <p>National Inventory of Collections – A computerized data bank of all major collections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalogue Assistance – support museums to prepare for eventual inclusion in the inventory | <p>Museum Assistance Program (MAP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition support • Facilities upgrading and equipment. • Collections management • Professional development • Priority initiatives (e.g., conferences, exhibitions) • Aboriginal museum development • Exhibition Transportation Services • Technical Advice for International Exhibitions • Insurance for Travelling Exhibitions • Facilities and Development <p>Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI)</p> <p>Movable Cultural Property Program</p> <p>Canadian Heritage Information Network (formerly National Inventory of Collections)</p> <p>Museum Policy Research</p> | <p>Museum Assistance Program (MAP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Access to Heritage • Reopening Fund for Heritage Organizations • Access to Heritage • Exhibition Circulation Fund • Indigenous Heritage • Collections Management • Canada-France Agreement <p>Movable Cultural Property Grants</p> <p>Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Program</p> <p>Canada Conservation Institute</p> <p>Canada Heritage Information Network</p> <p>Canada Cultural Spaces Fund</p> <p>Canada Cultural Investment Fund</p> |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Quantum ¹ | \$7.7 million ² (current) \$53 million (2022; constant) | \$6 million ³ (current) \$11 million (2022; constant) | \$39.8 million ⁴ (current) \$42.45 million (2022; constant) |
| GDP | \$113.1 billion | \$593.9 billion | \$1,990.76 billion |
| Heritage Funding (as % of GDP) | 0.007% | 0.001% | 0.002% |

¹ Quantum refers to the amount available in one year. Constant prices are adjusted for 2022.

² Case Study, National Museum Policies Timeline, 1970s, Museoception: A Museum of Museums and Cultural Policy, available from <https://museoception.ca/2021/07/23/case-study-national-museum-policies-timeline-1970s/#explicit-museum-policy-1970s-cci>

³ The policy announced \$53 million over a 5-year period. However, \$6 million was earmarked for the first year, i.e., 1990. Canadian Museum Policy, 1990.

⁴ 2021-22 Estimates Part I and II: The Government Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates. Available from [2021-22-estimates-eng.pdf \(canada.ca\)](#). The figures, sourced from and validated by PCH, include \$15.7 million in grants and contributions to the Museums Assistance Program, \$13.2 million funding from Canada Cultural Spaces Fund for the heritage sector, \$2 million funding from the Canada Cultural Investment Fund for the heritage sector, and \$8.9 million in services provided by Canada Conservation Institute (CCI) and Canada Heritage Information Network (CHIN).