

**THE STATE OF MUSEUMS IN CANADA  
BRIEF TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Canadian Museums Association**

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**June 2016**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Canadian museums are extremely valued by the public however they have been undervalued and ignored by the governments, especially at the federal level. The federal government has invested significantly in its own national museums to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars per year, but it has paid scant regard to the other museums across the country.

The Canadian patrimony is not all located in national museums, not by a long shot, and the real stories that shaped this country are found in local, regional and small museums and galleries across our incredible land. This is a rich tapestry knitted together by the love of volunteers and some generous donors. It is a tapestry that is very fragile and this country needs to take this issue very seriously. Our brief aims to present the current state of these museums, and the support they require moving forward to fulfill their important role in society.

We encourage you to undertake the first ever parliamentary study of the state of Canadian museums in a comprehensive way. In the past, the committee has looked at Canadian culture writ large, but never focused solely on museums.

You will discover fascinating stories of this country and its rich regions, but you will also hear stories of neglect, lost opportunities and grave disappointments. We encourage you to visit many museums and to undertake a full investigation to make meaningful recommendations for the benefit of Canadians. The portrait of our museums may not be what you are expecting. Our cultural heritage binds us together and leads us forward in new and innovative ways of working together for a rich and tolerant land.

## **A PORTRAIT OF CANADA'S MUSEUMS**

Museums are an important part of the fabric of our country. Canada's counts more than 2,600 museums, public art galleries and related heritage institutions, the stewards to our national heritage who preserve our collective memory. Museums employ more than 32,000 people and over 103,000 volunteers (who contribute over 5.6 million hours per year!) across the country.

The Government of Canada has a special responsibility for federally owned and operated museums such as the National Museums, National Historic Sites and National Defence Museums under the Department of National Defence. In addition to these important institutions, which act as federal agencies with significant support from the federal government, the vast amount of our heritage is held in non-profit, provincial, regional, and local museums and galleries located in every region of our nation. These organizations are run very efficiently by private non-profit bodies, dependent upon dedicated volunteers and resourceful techniques to survive. They provide a useful model to be nurtured and require new tools for survival in these uncertain times.

## A Sample of Museums' Sizes/Operational Budgets Across Canada

Annual Budget	%
\$100,000 or less	16%
\$100,000 to \$499,999	<b>46%</b>
\$500,000 to \$999,999	15%
\$1 M to \$4,999,999	13%
\$5 M to \$15,000,000	4%
Over \$15,000,000	3%

Close to 62 million people visit our museums, galleries, and historic sites each year, including 7.5 million school children. The economic and social impact of museums in Canada is enormous. Past surveys have demonstrated that people who visit museums indicate a very high appreciation level (78%), and agree that they provide valuable learning experiences (91%), whether they are located in large urban areas or remote communities. With so many non-profit museums, historic sites and related cultural institutions across Canada, all citizens can find themselves represented in these places of discovery and learning. No longer static or traditional temples, museums have transformed themselves into innovative community hubs, becoming more engaged and relevant within their communities.

### **The value of Canadian museums in Canadian Society and beyond**

2016 marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the release of the Massey-Lévesque Report. Appointed in 1949 by the federal government, the Commissioners were asked to explore the state of the arts, sciences and humanities in Canadian society. The resulting 1951 Report called upon the federal government to take a strong role in the fostering, promotion and funding of the arts and cultural sector, as well as providing support for the development of the humanities and sciences.

In the intervening sixty five years, successive federal governments have developed an array of policies, programs and other measures to build a national awareness and enjoyment of the rich legacy of Canadian history, artistic expression and scientific achievements. For the most part these measures have focussed on the large government owned institutions.

Canadian museums and art galleries have played a major role in providing access to various dimensions of this legacy. Canadians in turn have responded by making museums and art galleries popular destinations for all ages, in all parts of the country.

Canadian museums and art galleries retain their popularity through the development of a variety of programmes, exhibitions and services. As centres of lifelong learning, they are valuable resources in the research, preservation and interpretation of Canada's heritage. Museums and galleries foster a better understanding of Canadian life and its history with new Canadian citizens and promote Canadian identity beyond our borders.

## SUPPORTING OUR MUSEUMS

Our preliminary recommendations, prepared with extensive consultation and presented by the CMA Board of Directors, are grouped around four major themes central to the activities of all museums in Canada, big or small: Infrastructure and Management, Funding, Social Responsibilities, and Accessibility. The resources required to properly support our museums are quite modest.

### 1- Infrastructure and Management

#### a. Infrastructure:

The current state of non-government museums is generally one of extreme neglect. Museums house incredible resources for our society but they have been long ignored. As a result we face many crises over preservation, scholarship, education and sustainability of these valuable assets that need to be addressed immediately.

Roofs leak, buildings lack proper heat and humidity controls, artefacts rot away in poor conditions, little research is done – the reality facing many small museums is not a pretty picture, it is a shocking portrait.

New and practical solutions are required to address these issues. Museums are evolving and so must government support programs. A new vision is required and we will address this point in this document.

As the role of museums is changing, so too are the organizational realities they face. The skills needed to work in the museum sector are evolving to encompass a wide range of business management, fundraising expertises, and new technologies. Museum professionals are working closely with their communities to create value, and public relations and fundraising are becoming part of everyone's responsibilities.

#### b. Legislations and Administration:

With its growing public and digital presence, a museum management team faces growing challenges in regards to administrative and legal requirements, including copyright legislation, firearms legislation, digitization, and insurance, to name a few.

Currently very little contemporary art is online due to copyright laws and the inability of museums to pay the required fees. While libraries enjoy special measures, museums are left abandoned and the financial burden is placed on them to pay the artists or their heirs. This results in less contemporary art being shown in our galleries and online, and small museums/galleries are acutely affected.

A further issue is the identification of copyright owners who cannot be located. The current Canadian law is very much out of date and provides limited relief. It deprives users such as museums of the ability to use a particular work, and deprives the public of ever seeing these works. We request the Committee address this issue to help resolve it.

Thanks to the CMA's efforts the federal government now provides an indemnification program to support major loans of art works which are largely covered by the federal government. The Indemnification agreements are often complex and difficult to access by museums. Greater results could be forthcoming with support from governments. The CMA also operates a non-

profit insurance program for our members which has been very successful and has helped reduce premiums. This program operates with no governmental assistance. This has helped reduce insurance premiums for museums by as much as 50%. But most small and local museums are still unable to access the Indemnification Program.

c. Curatorial expertise, skills and professional development:

Most museums have lost or are losing specialist curators, which to many in the museum community signals a crisis. A lot of emphasis is placed on the “front of house” activities of museums (educational programs, exhibitions, tours...) rather than specialized “back of house” skills (conservation, curatorial expertise, restoration...) Without curators and specialists able to understand and interpret museums collections, museums are nothing.

There is an urgent need for more and better training opportunities offered to museum professionals. The Provincial Museum Associations do a great job at training, especially for small and local museums. However there is duplication and little overarching coordination. The CMA offers a bursary program to assist but the funding has been limited to \$75,000 in total per year. Some provinces, such as New-Brunswick and Alberta, also offer bursaries for to offset the cost of training.

Many colleges and universities offer museology or museum technical training such as the University of Toronto’s graduate program in Museum Studies, Algonquin College’s very practical Museums Studies program, University of Victoria’s onsite and distance learning program, the Masters in Museology offered at the Université de Montréal... There is no accreditation of these programs and little to no coordination. Many of the faculty are not plugged into the national scene and we often worry how effective they are and over the well-being of students.

d. Importance of networking of museums:

Museums succeed when they share their expertise, as have shown the award winning conservation projects, educational programs and exhibitions developed in partnership between various museums and art galleries. National and provincial museums have a leadership role to play with other museums across Canada to ensure their skills and resources benefit all.

A few examples illustrate how successful partnerships have developed over the last few years.

The Power of **Networking in Alberta**: Museums in Alberta are often collaborating to do joint marketing, helping each other with recycling materials, sharing information and expertise. Southern Alberta meets in different locations twice a year to do this and ‘steal’ good ideas from each other. We also get to know what each collection included and can then borrow materials.

The Quebec Regional Shared Services Model - **Cellules régionales d’expertise en muséologie (CREM)** : The Quebec Government helped implement this special initiative to support regional partnerships. The CREM offer specialized museological services and support to the numerous heritage institutions in the Mauricie and Montérégie and Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean regions (as test cases). As an example, instead of all museums having to hire conservators for restoration of artefacts, the CREM has the ability to contract a professional conservator who travels in each of the region’s institutions when required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

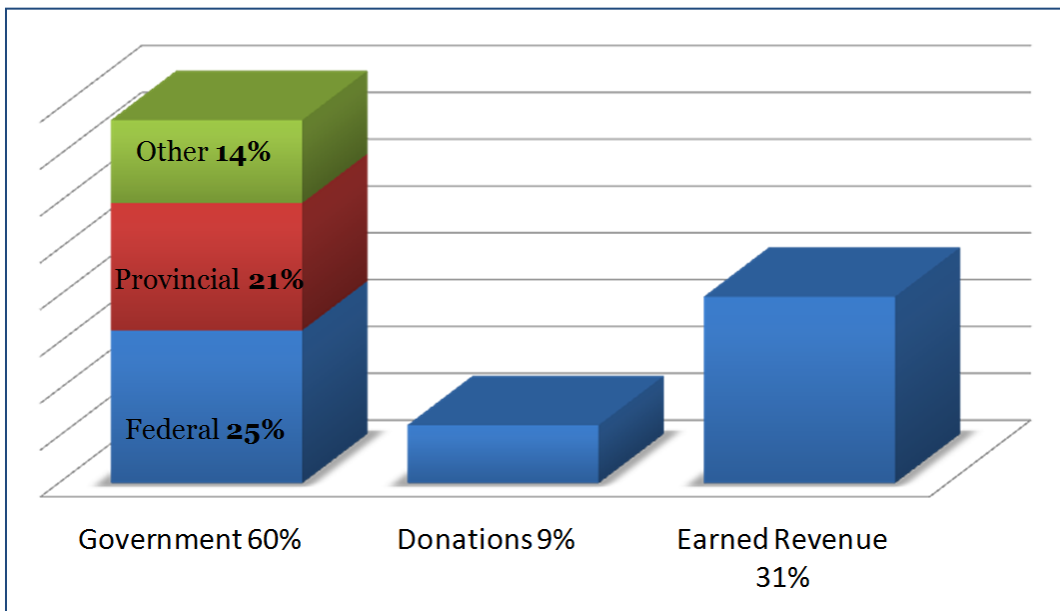
- i. We call for more and better coordination of **professional development programs** offered through the numerous associations and organisations, as well as those offered by colleges and universities. Federal museums and agencies need to support training as they have the expertise that needs to be shared freely. It must be noted that some have had an exemplary role such as the Canadian Museum of History but others are seriously lacking in this role.
- ii. The expertise at the **Canadian Conservation Institute** in Ottawa needs to be shared more broadly with museums across Canada. At one time the CCI had regional laboratories across the country and had extensive outreach programs. Today it has withdrawn due to funding limitations and is quietly based in Ottawa, mostly focussing on scholarly research and now sells its publications and many of its services. It is only able to provide a limited number of seminars on conservation techniques to museums each year. We believe its expertise should be better shared with more training seminars, more webinars, and more in-depth training sessions at its headquarters in Ottawa.
- iii. **Museums Collaboration:** We strongly recommend mechanisms be put in place to encourage museums to work closely together in regional groupings for shared storage space, shared conservation services, shared expertise, etc. Resources are and will continue to be limited. Only through complete collaboration and sharing of common services will many museums survive. National museums and other federal agencies have incredible expertise which should be shared with the wider museum community, from curatorial training, exhibit design, marketing, conservation, public programming, etc. This is a wise path forward but museums need to be encouraged to work together. Incentives are required.
- iv. **Copyright Administration:** There will be a statutory review of Canada's copyright laws in the near future and we request your consideration of the issues which affect museums' ability to display or promote items under copyright control. We further are concerned over the implications of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement to extend the duration of copyright to life + 70 years which we find to be groundless and only of benefit to corporate interests.

We also request a review of the Exhibition Right, which is unique to Canada, and which impedes museums' ability to share Canada's creative heritage with the public. These are significant issues that affect the free flow of information over borders, and that impact libraries and archives as well. The Senate of Canada rejected the Exhibition Right in 1989. It places an administrative and financial burden on museums which exhibit copyright protected works on their or other premises. We request an "exception", not an "exemption", be made in the copyright law to permit the owner of a work to exhibit it on their premises, similar to the law in the United States. We renew our request for a special fund to be established to pay the Exhibition Rights and related fees for publication of works on websites and other platforms, somewhat similar to the Public Lending Right which compensates authors for books used from libraries. A study should be undertaken to determine the scope of such a fund to permit copyright works to be publically displayed as well as the images to be published on line.

- v. **Museum Insurance and Indemnification:** We recommend a review of this very successful program with a view to expanding the concept in new and creative ways. For example, the State of Illinois provides immunity from certain types of civil liabilities for those who serve on non-profit boards of directors. Similarly the US Volunteers Protection Act of 1997 protects volunteers from personal liabilities. No similar protections exist in Canada to our knowledge.
- vi. **Federal Firearms Legislation:** This has been a questionable and difficult irritant for museums. It has been costly and time consuming for museums to administer the firearms that are stored and conserved in their collections. We request an immediate exemption for bona fide museums from this legislation.

## 2- Funding

Typical Sources of Financial Support for Canada's Museums:



a. The current funding model:

The federal government offers support to Canada's museums and heritage organizations through a variety of important although very modest funding programs. These programs are extremely important for the recipients, yet they have been subject to many cuts over the years. They are difficult to access and no longer meet the needs of today's museum community.

For example, the Museums Assistance Program (MAP) was created in 1972 with a total annual allocation of \$7 million for grants to fund projects at non-federal museums. Based on inflation,

this investment would be equivalent to over \$38 million at today's value. **MAP's current allocation is only \$6.5 million per year.** The Canadian Museums Association has brought this important issue to the attention of several committees, including FINA, ministers and members of Parliament for years.

This is a valued program which supports exhibitions, conservation and preservation work, educational programs, and staff training at museums. It is also important to understand that in 1972, there were about 500 museums in Canada, whereas today Canada counts more than 2,600 museums. Clearly the vast majority do not receive any federal assistance. This is a further indication of the erosion of this program.

We gladly note that the Minister has recently streamlined the approval processes and delegated smaller grant/contributions agreements to senior staff. These are very positive steps to improve extraordinary delays and will help restore morale with the public service. We support these moves and hope they will be extended.

There is a lack of an over-arching vision for museums in Canada. Our country's current National Museum Policy, also established in 1972, was last reviewed in 1990. The focus and concentration is often on national museums and institutions of a larger scale. It is now time for Canada's new government to renew its commitment to our museums, which are major generators for our tourism and social sectors.

b. Revenue diversification, incl. sponsorship, philanthropy:

While museums and heritage organizations have relied heavily on government support in the past, this is increasingly not the case today. Many museums are diversifying their sources of income, especially through earned revenues (e.g. admission fees, store sales, rentals, sponsorships). As an example, the volunteers at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta, harvest heritage seeds from the native plants garden and sell more than 40 kinds of seeds in 5 retail outlets. These seeds support the museum's garden development and encourage low-water use gardening in the region.

The focus needs to be on creating the right conditions for Canadians to donate more robustly to their museums and heritage organizations, enabling them to increase their earned revenues and long-term stability. Private sector donations are a key source of this earned income, and this is where, we would argue, we need to up the ante. We know that while the Government of Canada has increased tax incentives for private donations to charities (including museums and heritage organizations), few have been able to take advantage of this new incentive structure due to lack of fundraising expertise and heavy competition from more sophisticated charities. The fact is, donations of cash or publicly-traded securities have not increased significantly. Other sectors, such as health care, universities, and hospitals have been very successful, but museums have not been due to profile, image and expertise. At the same time, experience also shows that programs such as this are a powerful incentive for existing private donors to increase their donations as well as for new donors to come on board.



Earned revenue has increased greatly at museums (gift shops, rentals, admissions, etc.) but still needs to be supported with greater resources and professional development. CMA offers a Museum Enterprise Conference annually, which focuses on the development of retail and other earned revenue opportunities for museums. This is a very successful event. The CMA also offers a wholesale program to diminish overhead costs and while increase earned revenue and recognition at local museums.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. We strongly recommend the development of a new **National Museum Strategy** and a review of the complete suite of heritage programs at the Department of Canadian Heritage, and other appropriate departments (such as the Department of National Defence for many military museums, Foreign Affairs, Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Employment and Social Development), in order to modernize them and allow an appropriate investment of new funds.
- ii. We call for an immediate infusion of some \$40 million per year to the **Museums Assistance Program** just to take this program up to where it should be adjusted for inflation. This would be based on a review of current programs and the needs of the museum community. However given the growth in this sector, one could argue for a much higher amount. The current program is close to irrelevant to the larger museums and most small museums are ineligible for any project funding.
- iii. Given the vast number of museums in Canada (non-profit only), we feel it may be prudent for the various levels of government to establish priorities/**qualified standards** for museums based on significance of collections, on expertise and on sustainability of these institutions. We do not believe all museums are equal or need to be fully sustained. Considering limited government funding, museums accessing sustained support should meet qualified standards. Museums which are not sustainable or below standards should be permitted to close with the collections dispersed to other museums.
- iv. We strongly recommend a 5-year initiative, the **Canadians Supporting Their Museums Fund**, to stimulate sustained private sector (individual and corporate) support to Canadian museums and heritage organizations. The fund would match private sector donations dollar-for-dollar—to an annual ceiling—for the purpose of contributing to a museum’s endowment or other initiatives such as research and preservation. Our objective over the life of the fund would be to increase the percentage of museums’ total operating budgets that comes from private donations from 9% to 15-20%. As an example, the average American museum received approximately 40% of its revenue from donations. Another objective would be to see museums and heritage organizations increase their fiscal health and self-sufficiency as a result of participating in this initiative.

### 3- Social Responsibilities

a. Public awareness and engagement:

Museums across the world are engaging in new innovative activities and programs that reinforce their important social role. Published in 2013, *Museums Change Lives* established the United Kingdom Museums Association's vision for the increased social impact of museums. Although there is currently not an overarching vision of the sort for Canada, many Canadian museums have developed and implemented social programs meant to engage the public in positive and innovative ways. From working with health agencies in developing therapeutic programs, to exploring the topics of climate change, sexual identity, mental health and disabilities, museums engage the public in important social conversations.

*Roll on Columbia: Exploring the Landscape and Culture of the Columbia River Treaty* was developed by Touchstones Nelson: Museum of Art and History in British Columbia to discuss the importance role the Columbia River plays in the socio-economic development of the regions surrounding it, from the US to Canada. Another exhibition of note is *Lake Winnipeg: Shared Solutions*, developed by The Manitoba Museum and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (MB) to educate and engage the public about the effects of climate change on Lake Winnipeg.

b. Indigenous Engagement:

Aboriginal leadership in the museum community has significantly increased over the years, including the support for more indigenous cultural centres on and off reserves, and professional development programs such as the Aboriginal Training Program in Museum Practice at the Canadian Museum of History. But Indigenous representation in the broader museum community is still too low, especially for a country like ours.

From Coast to Coast, though, we are seeing incredible projects emanating from Aboriginal and museums initiatives and partnerships:

The Musqueam Indian Band, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Museum of Vancouver and the University of Waterloo were presented the CMA's fifth annual History Alive! Award for their collaborative exhibition *čəsnaʔəm, the city before the city*, which shined a spotlight on Vancouver's historic and contemporary Indigenous cultural landscape. The outstanding project used a variety of innovative techniques and technologies to connect visitors with one of the largest ancient village and burial sites upon which Vancouver was built. The multidisciplinary exhibition presented the history of the ancient village in a unique way as the visitor journeys through three distinct sites.

In Quebec, the Aanischaaukamikw — Cree Cultural Institute's multi-platform project *Mind's Eye*, which includes a book, theatrical presentation, and educational program, helps preserve the stories of Elders, and the knowledge that they have to share, to ensure that they continue to be passed on from generation to generation.

Other important museological questions that need to be addressed in our country are the care of aboriginal collections, their return to their rightful owner, the employment of more indigenous curators and directors, and ways of facilitating reconciliation. Canada has a lack of focus and cohesion around Indigenous cultural and heritage policy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **Museums and Indigenous Peoples:** The CMA and the Assembly of First Nations undertook a landmark study published in 1992 which led to the repatriation of human remains and sacred materials. This also led to the implementation of a training program for Indigenous people at the Canadian Museum of History, and the establishment of many new indigenous run and owned museums. Much more needs to be done. CMA has proposed the establishment of a new Council of Museums and Indigenous Peoples to review the progress achieved, and address the disappointments, particularly in the face of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada just ratified. This Council would undertake a 2 year review and make recommendations to governments and the museum community.

### 4- Accessibility

- a. **Current state of physical and virtual accessibility of museums:**  
The digital world creates both possibilities and enormous challenges for museums. The demand for more online content is growing, yet few museums in Canada, apart from the larger institutions with sustained support, have the ability and resources required for a true digital independence – making their collections, expertise and resources available online.
- b. **New accessibility initiatives, including digital outreach and engagement:**  
The Virtual Museum of Canada, now managed by the Canadian Museum of History, offers museums across the country access to expertise and financial support to develop and share their stories and heritage online, through the Virtual Exhibits program (for large multi-year projects), and the Community Memories program (for smaller local history projects).  
  
Other initiatives and partnerships in the private sector have been successful, including a successful partnership between the CMA and TakingITGlobal, which aims to increase youth engagement in museums and historical sites via technology. Explore150 is an interactive app and website that encourages youth to visit museums and heritage sites, and engages them in interactive quests on their mobile devices while there.
- c. **Audience development:**  
Museums are constantly increasing opportunities to engage a wider and more diverse audience. Successful programs such as the Cultural Access Pass (CAP) program continue to grow in popularity and reach. Managed by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), the Pass provides access to more than 1,200 cultural institutions for new Canadian citizens for an entire year following their citizenship ceremony. Many museums have also recently opened their doors to Syrian refugees.

Museums also provide stimulating opportunities for youth to get started on the right career path, thanks to summer jobs and internships made available through the Young Canada Works in Heritage program. In 2015 alone, 750 museums across the country offered 1,325 young Canadians invaluable professional experience through the program, and the figure will grow with more funding announced in 2016.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Although larger museums can plan marketing and promotional expenditures as part of their operational budgets, the majority of local/community museums tend to rely on free advertisement or marketing opportunities when available. Museums across Canada would greatly benefit from a **national public appreciation campaign** to not only raise awareness about museums, their programming and impact, but to also create greater appreciation for what these important institutions contribute to Canada.

## CONCLUSION

We respectfully submit our brief recognizing that it has been quickly prepared due to the short notice to appear before this committee, but can assure you that it is representative of our members' current accomplishments and concerns looking forward. We hope it gives you the context of the current situation facing museums, especially smaller institutions. We would however strongly recommend you undertake a more in-depth and complete study of Canada's museum sector, and not limit yourself to only three days of investigation. We would be pleased to return with a more detailed set of recommendations at that time.

**Submitted on June 14, 2016**

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### About the Canadian Museums Association

The Canadian Museums Association (CMA) is a national not for profit organization representing the interests of over 2000 museums in every province and territory in Canada. The CMA is governed by an elected Board of Directors and is also active internationally in the International Council of Museums.

Museums are institutions created in the public interest. They engage their visitors, foster deeper understanding and promote the enjoyment and sharing of authentic cultural and natural heritage. Museums acquire, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit the tangible and intangible evidence of society and nature. As educational institutions, museums provide a physical forum for critical inquiry and investigation. [www.museums.ca](http://www.museums.ca)