



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 022 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I call the committee to order

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we're looking at an overview of the state of Canadian museums, excluding the major national museums.

Today we have four witnesses here representing the Canadian Museums Association.

I'm hoping that you will help us with this overview of the state of the smaller museums in Canada, so thank you for coming.

Here's how it works. Each of you can take 10 minutes, because you have 10 minutes to present, and then we have a question-and-answer session. At eight minutes, I will give you a two-minute indicator so that you know you have to stop. Thank you so much.

Now, who will begin?

Go ahead, Mr. McAvity.

Mr. John McAvity (Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Museums Association): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to open by saying that we are extremely pleased and honoured to be here today. This study—this “overview”, as you put it—is extremely important to our sector. We take it very seriously and so we're delighted to be here.

I would like to introduce the other panellists who are with me.

[Translation]

First, we have Manon Blanchette, President of the Board, Canadian Museums Association. She is also the Front-line Activities Director at Pointe-à-Callière in Montreal.

[English]

Also here is Susan Burrows-Johnson, who is the director of the Galt Museum in Lethbridge, Alberta, a municipal museum, and Karen Bachmann. Karen is the director of the Timmins Museum in Ontario.

The Chair: You have a western representative, Ms. Burrows-Johnson.

Thank you.

Mr. John McAvity: We almost had somebody from your riding, but she was unable to attend today, so we were sorry about that.

This study is crucial to understanding the changing role of museums within their communities and across Canada from static old temples of yesterday to today's vibrant and engaged community hubs, and to understand the challenges brought on by the new role and the changing populations and resources that they face.

[Translation]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette (President of the Board, Canadian Museums Association, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Front-line Activities, Pointe-à-Callière, Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal): Museums play an essential role in our society. Canada has more than 2,600 museums, art galleries and related heritage institutions. They employ more than 32,000 people and 103,000 volunteers all over the country. Almost 62 million people visit our museums, galleries and historic sites each year, including 7.5 million students.

The economic and social impacts of museums in Canada are huge. Surveys show that people who visit museums indicate a very high level of satisfaction, at 78%. Ninety-one per cent of the visitors agree that museums provide valuable learning experiences, both in major urban areas and in rural community museums.

Museums are seen as trusted and respected cultural institutions. Their popularity is explained by the variety of their exhibition programming and the services they provide. I should even add that, more and more, we are talking about museum experiences. These experiences vary. They can be multisensory and multimedia.

As centres for continuing education, museums are also key players in research into, and the conservation and interpretation of, Canada's heritage. Museums foster a better understanding of Canada's history and life in Canada for new Canadians, and promote Canadian identity beyond our borders.

As a national association, the Canadian Museums Association represents the interests of more than 2,000 members all across Canada. Our mission is to maintain meaningful links between museums and their communities, and to enhance the value of museums in society.

•(0850)

[English]

We are here today to share our assessment of Canada's museums, based on extensive consultations, and to offer preliminary recommendations to guide the committee's study of our country's museums. We respectfully request being invited back at a later time to further explore these issues and address the questions raised during the course of the committee's study.

Thank you.

Ms. Karen Bachmann (Director, Timmins Museum and National Exhibition Centre): The 10-page brief submitted to you today depicts the current state of museums in Canada and highlights some innovative projects and activities that demonstrate the changing role of contemporary museums.

It follows important consultations and studies undertaken by both Société des musées du Québec's "*États généraux des musées du Québec*" in 2011, and the Ontario Museum Association's recently published "*Ontario's Museums 2025: Looking Ahead*", in which I participated.

Our brief also puts forward important recommendations aimed to improve the support offered to Canada's museum community in order to ensure its stability and its sustainability.

Our presentation this morning focuses on only a few of these recommendations, so we invite you to read our detailed brief for more information.

Through their outstanding exhibitions, educational programs, and outreach, museums offer opportunities for valuable learning experiences and social dialogue. This public face of museums is well understood and appreciated, yet the majority of museum operations occur behind the scenes, and this is where they require more public and private support.

Let me be blunt. The current state of non-government museums in general is one of extreme neglect. Roofs leak, buildings lack proper heat and humidity controls, artifacts rot away in poor conditions, and little research is accomplished. The reality facing many small museums is not a pretty picture; it is a shocking portrait.

The skills needed to work in the museum sector are also evolving to encompass a wide range of business management, fundraising expertise, and new technologies. Museum professionals are working closely with their communities to create value, and more emphasis is placed on public relations, digital outreach, and fundraising expertise.

[*Translation*]

Most museums have lost or are losing their curators and experts; in the eyes of many in the museum world, this is evidence of a crisis. Without curators or experts able to understand and interpret the museum collections, they are nothing. There is an urgent need to provide a greater range and a greater number of training opportunities for museums and museum professionals.

Museums also require better support for the many administrative and legal tasks that result from their growing activities and responsibilities. This support includes an improvement of the Copyright Act, the exclusion of museums from the Firearms Act, a loosening of insurance requirements, support for digitization initiatives, and the encouragement of partnerships between small and large museums, just to give a few examples.

[*English*]

Ms. Susan Burrows-Johnson (Director of the Board, Executive Director, Galt Museum and Archives, Canadian Museums Association): Funding will always be seen as one of the biggest concerns for museums, especially smaller community museums.

While museums and heritage organizations have relied heavily on government support in the past, this is increasingly not the case today. At the federal level there is an astounding lack of an overarching vision for museums in Canada.

Our country's current national museum policy was established in 1972. It was last reviewed in 1990. The focus and concentration is on the national museums and institutions of larger scale. It is now time for Canada's new government to renew its commitment to museums, which are generators for our tourism and social sectors.

The museums assistance program, or MAP, was also created in 1972, with \$7 million for grants to fund projects in non-federal museums. At that time there were 500 museums. Based on inflation, this investment would be equivalent to over \$38 million today. MAP's current allocation is \$6.5 million, for more than 2,600 museums.

Although this is a very valued program for preservation, conservation, and exhibits, clearly the vast majority will not receive any federal assistance.

We strongly recommend the development of a new national museum strategy and a complete review of the suite of heritage programs at the Department of Canadian Heritage and other appropriate departments in order to modernize and allow the appropriate level of investment of new funds.

At this time, we also believe that special focus needs to put be on creating the right conditions for Canadians to donate more robustly to their museums and heritage organizations, enabling them to increase their revenues and their long-term stability.

Aboriginal leadership in the museum community has increased over the last years, but indigenous participation in the broader museum community is still under-represented. As an important first step, we recommend the establishment of a new council of museums and indigenous people to review the progress achieved since 1992 in the landmark study on museums and first peoples, which was called "*Turning the Page*", and to address the recommendations identified in the truth and reconciliation report as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

● (0855)

Mr. John McAvity: Finally, museums across Canada are engaging in new and innovative activities to bolster a much more meaningful social role. From working with health agencies in developing therapeutic programs to dealing with the topics of climate change, mental health, sexual identity, death and grieving, and the prevention of crime, museums engage the public in important social issues.

For the most part, these museums today are not your grandparents' museums. They have changed dramatically. They had to, in order to survive. In fact, with dwindling public funds, they had to stand on their own two feet much more strongly. They strive to be community centres today, places of dialogue and learning.

Museums across Canada would also greatly benefit from a public appreciation campaign to raise awareness about not only their programming but also their impact and image. Museums are often, stereotypically, thought of as these dusty old cabinets, and that is an image we are very much trying to dispel. It is not what the community looks like today.

In short, we believe a campaign on public appreciation would be very valuable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to highlight the important contributions of Canadian culture and heritage.

We thank you for your time today. We urge you to make this a very meaningful and significant study on the state of Canadian museums, and we look forward to your coming out with some very strong recommendations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McAvity, Ms. Blanchette, Ms. Bachmann, and Ms. Burrows-Johnson.

Now we will go to a component of this, which is a question-and-answer period. The first round is a seven-minute round, which includes questions and answers. I'd like everybody to be as concise as possible in order to get many questions in.

We begin with Mr. O'Regan for the Liberals.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Thank you very much for your presentation.

I sat on the board of The Rooms in St. John's, Newfoundland, for 10 years. It housed our provincial museum, art gallery, and archives, and they now exist as one entity. They do remarkable things together. I say that for a point of reference.

Federal responsibilities for heritage and museums are set out in the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the Museums Act. There are a number of programs we've looked at that support the museum sector. They include the museums assistance program, the movable cultural property program, the Canada travelling exhibitions indemnification program, Young Canada Works in Heritage Organizations, the Canada Cultural Investment Fund, the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, the Canadian Conservation Institute, and the Canadian Heritage Information Network. That's a lot for individual museums to deal with.

Is that legislative framework adapting to your needs? How can the department go further to meet your needs? What changes would you like to see?

• (0900)

Mr. John McAvity: I'll give a kick at that.

Frankly, many of the department's programs are out of date, and they are no longer meeting the needs of the community. We have said that. We've been on record saying that. That is nothing new.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: It was last reviewed in 1990, as you said.

Mr. John McAvity: Yes, 1990.

In fact, the museums assistance program was supposed to go up to about \$20 million per year. That had been the promised commitment at that time. It never made it. Today it's less money than it was in 1972. It's close to almost irrelevant. Many larger museums do not have the time, particularly, to invest in an application process.

Now I have to say that the minister has recently made some changes to the administration of the program that are really good. They are going to speed up the process, but it has taken up to six months to get an answer back on grants. Hopefully that will be much quicker in the future, but the pot of money is still very small.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Okay.

Is there anything else from any of you?

Ms. Karen Bachmann: I'll just add that from a smaller museum's perspective, the grants can be quite daunting in terms of getting it together and putting it together.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Yes, that's been my experience, too.

Ms. Karen Bachmann: If you're just one or two staff members, the expertise required to actually formulate the application properly so that you get the right wording—

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: It is a singular expertise.

Ms. Karen Bachmann: You got it. In smaller institutions, it's a little more difficult. We do have very good people working in the department, however, who have offered a lot of support. The staff has been really good, but again, it is daunting for smaller museums, and it's competitive. Smaller museums are faced with competing against larger institutions that are much more sophisticated in their ability to deliver these kinds of things. The success rate is not as happy as it could be.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: I'm still getting over the fact that 1990 is 26 years ago.

Ms. Karen Bachmann: Yes.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: It blows me away.

We have a couple of programs that the last budget supported. The Canada Cultural Spaces Fund was at \$24.9 million. I think we've moved it up to \$168.2 million. That is meant to go to improvement, renovation, and construction of arts and heritage facilities, to specialized equipment, and to one that I'm really big on, which is the youth employment strategy. There's \$330 million for that. Some of that is to go to the heritage sector for increased job opportunities for young Canadians in the heritage sector.

Obviously, I think that's something you'd welcome. I think we'd probably agree on that. I'm just wondering how you see yourselves utilizing it and how much help it will be in doing what you guys have to do every day.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: This will not perhaps be a direct answer to your question, but it was brought up in the text that I submitted. It was not the case 40 years ago, but today, museums are suffering from a great lack of funds for in-museum research. It was once considered that museums were centres for research. Now, that is no longer possible.

Who better to conduct research than museum curators, who have the objects close at hand? In my opinion, a special program should be developed to allow curators to identify objects first. A huge number of objects in museums are poorly identified, poorly catalogued and poorly accessible to the public, because they are not digitized. Now, with the Internet, we can have access to those objects digitally.

So there is an urgent need to establish a program like that.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: With regard to information and communication technologies, I know that a number of institutions have been digitizing their collections and making them available to the public. Can you give us an idea of how the digitization of your collections or your presentations has worked for you? Is it taking up too much of your budget? Are you not receiving enough in order to complement it?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: It is very difficult to digitize in all museums. Actually, we are waiting for grants to do a little digitization. Very few museums have digitized their collections, either in Quebec or in the other provinces. We are doing it little by little. I would say that hardly 2% of the collections are currently digitized.

● (0905)

[*English*]

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: In my experience, it's one of those things that immediately makes common sense, but it does take a tremendous amount of time and resources.

Mr. John McAvity: If I could bring this up, there's another complication with digitization, and that is copyright. For contemporary art, when the rights are still owned by the artist, which is usually the case, the simple costs of paying royalty fees and getting permission to put things online really is preventing a lot of contemporary Canadian art from coming online.

If you go to the National Gallery's website or to that of the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal and so on, you'll see a very limited amount of their collection. There are only items whose copyright has expired or that are in the public domain, generally speaking. That creates a huge lacuna in terms of the public's access and ability to see contemporary art.

The other thing I'd like to point out is that there's been a lot of emphasis on digitization, yet we're seeing an increase in people walking into galleries. They want to see the real thing. The participation online hasn't really been that significant. The Canadian Heritage Information Network has been trying to digitize and put

together an inventory since 1972 of all the artifacts in Canada, and it's still woefully inadequate. There are large gaps in it and, to be quite honest with you, not very much public use of it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McAvity.

I think we'll move on now to Mr. Van Loan for the Conservatives.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you.

We heard from Monsieur Rivard at our last meeting that there's a bit of a training gap that exists. In museum studies, they do well at teaching people to become a director or curator of the Musée des beaux-arts in Montreal, but then students find themselves in a one-room museum in the Gaspé. That was his example. They're not really equipped for all the nuts and bolts of running museums. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Ms. Karen Bachmann: Definitely, it is a different field. When you are in a large museum, you can specialize. You become somebody who can do some wonderful work. When you're in a one-room site or a smaller site, you have to be a jack of all trades. The ability to adapt to that and to still maintain the standards you're being held to can be very difficult for people who have a very formalized training, and it can be difficult for people who don't have any training. There is that gap in between that needs to be addressed somehow.

There are a lot of good programs out there that are being supported by the federal government through the provincial museum associations and their ability to deliver programs and training to smaller sites. Perhaps a bit of standardization throughout the country would also help in that connection.

Ms. Susan Burrows-Johnson: I just want to add that the Galt museum sits in southern Alberta. We've formed a network of all our regional museums. I'm wondering if the federal government could look at some mechanisms within Canadian Heritage that would assist in partnering. We can bring together groups and we can go out and assist. Our curator can help. The small towns around us care for their collections.

It would be very helpful, under a complete review of the national museum policy, to encourage partnership work and the sharing of resources. I think if this government were to continue down the road of generating a new national museum policy, you would attract attention to the public value of museums and assist us.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Building on that, one of the federal programs is the Conservation Institute. They are available to do training. They do a lot of it through, for example, the Ontario Museum Association, but I've heard from other museums, and we heard at our last meeting, that some of that trickle-down doesn't happen. There seem to be a lot of smaller museums saying that they need help on curating, that they need to be taught how to train. I just want to observe that this gap seems to be there.

On the co-operation aspect and so on, Madame Blanchette, you're from Montreal, where the museum directors have created a collective storage solution. Perhaps you could tell us a bit about that. It seems to me to be one of the innovative solutions to one of the bigger problems that people have.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: Actually, we established a shared collections centre in Montreal a few years ago now. It is now full and we are starting a second phase, another collection centre. As for the management model, this is a building belonging to the ETS. It has been renovated with cutting-edge technology. For example, when the climate changes, an exterior membrane maintains the temperature constant. This really is high technology. All the museums in Montreal rent a space and share the costs, so that it is much less expensive than for each to build their own storage themselves.

There is going to be another project, probably a little outside Montreal with some similar museums. With contemporary art especially, the pieces are very big. So a second project is on the drawing board for the development of another collection centre. I feel that the model is a success. It has generated international interest and a significant number of visits.

• (0910)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: What's the role of your museum association in trying to encourage such solutions elsewhere? Do you have a role in doing that?

Mr. John McAvity: I'm sorry; I didn't get the first part of the question.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Should your association have a role in trying to encourage some of these collective solutions we're talking about with regard to training, storage, and so on?

Mr. John McAvity: Absolutely.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: If these solutions aren't in place everywhere, what's the right vehicle for delivering them, and how should it be done?

Mr. John McAvity: We work very closely with all the other associations or provincial museum associations across the country. There are even some municipal ones. We work very closely with them and coordinate as best we can with very limited resources.

I think it's important to say that with all the cutbacks that have happened in the sector, even the associations have taken quite major hits, and the money is not there for travel anymore. We're having to find new ways of doing things.

There are urgent needs for us to get together and coordinate activities much better. In the training area, for example, there's quite a bit of duplication of effort and a lot that could be simplified. It could be made available electronically and made more accessible. There's no need to be reinventing the wheel.

You mentioned the Canadian Conservation Institute and its training program. Its training program is magnificent, but it is limited. They can do only one seminar per province every year. That's all. That institute is full of expertise. Those doors need to be

blown open; the staff need to be getting out there and sharing their expertise.

It's the same thing with the national museums. We're very fortunate to have very well-established and very professional national museums. They have tremendous collections. They have tremendous expertise. That expertise needs to be shared much more than it is. The Canadian Museum of History, for example, does an excellent job on training and on sharing its expertise. We would like to see that put in place with all the other national museums as well.

These are just some examples of working together and collaborating.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Do I have time?

The Chair: You have a minute to go, 30 seconds now.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Maybe we'll repeat this in the next round, but what I hear from museums is that while there is funding for various things, the only thing there is never funding for, what they consider the biggest gap, is promoting and marketing. Can you speak to that?

Mr. John McAvity: You're hitting the nail right on the head. The public understanding of what museums are and what they do needs to change. We don't have the ability to do that kind of marketing. We would like to do it. We'd like to improve the public's understanding, and we know that by doing so attendance is going to flourish and people will become better educated and better informed about this country. We will all be better citizens as a result of more engagement.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I go to Mr. Nantel for the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to all of you for being here this morning. We really feel your commitment to your communities. I certainly notice it.

But there have been several decades of partisan interests and short-term strategies. I feel that it is time to do an in-depth study on the matter. I thank my colleague for proposing a study like this.

That said, we are only devoting three sessions to the study, which will allow us only to do an overview of the matter. We all remember the librarian or the person responsible for the history centre at school telling us, when we were children, that nothing is more lost than when it is misfiled. By seeking to draw conclusions too quickly, I am afraid that we are simply filing the issue away by claiming that we have finished our museum study, whereas there is a lot of information to gather.

When we look for a solution for a given issue, we normally ask the witnesses to make recommendations. I will not ask you that question because I believe that we first have to hear from everyone on the issue. As you said, it would be good for you to come back to the committee as a wrap-up.

Mrs. Blanchette, you mentioned the number of volunteers involved, but I do not remember the exact number.

• (0915)

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: It's 103,000.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: They are all worthy, passionate people who want to share. The very nature of their involvement is to share. We are told that there is no longer any money for marketing. Indeed, with community organizations, that task comes at the very end of the list. Everyone has all kinds of goodwill, but the roof is falling in and it has to be repaired. All of a sudden, the season starts, the doors have to be opened, and on it goes. As with a lot of seasonal things, we never manage to think long-term and we are always reacting to emergencies.

Can the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation still get you excited about conducting an interesting pilot project? It could serve as a test in finding various solutions and in verifying the validity of some ideas. We are investing in that at the moment and it is a good time to do it.

I am sure that everyone agrees that not enough has been done as regards Canada 150, but is there still time to do something?

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: I think that everyone agrees that there is not a lot of time left. However, things can be done in the short time remaining.

We could rely on flagship projects that had already been submitted and set aside. We need to continue some of the aspects that have already been started, so that we can make sure that those key projects are completed and that the public will be interested in them.

So there is still work to be done.

I do not just want to speak for Quebec only, but you are also very aware that the 150th anniversary of Confederation and the 375th anniversary of Montreal are linked. The Government of Canada is involved in both birthday celebrations, Canada's and Montreal's.

As I see it, there is still work to be done on this and it still can be done.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I can tell you this morning that everyone remembers Mr. Rivard's recent testimony. He impressed us greatly with his knowledge and his charisma. In the best of worlds, we would build on some of Mr. Rivard's hypotheses, and your own, and then test them in certain museums. We can be very ambitious. We are, for example, in our study on regional media. In that case, our involvement as members of Parliament in each of our regions is to stand up for the vitality of our communities through the media. We are even planning to visit communities in remote regions that have to deal with the situation most specifically. We are ambitious; I feel that the committee wants to solve some problems.

Do any points jump out at you, in your view?

Earlier, my colleague was talking about training. A centralized storage facility has been discussed. People have also talked to us about a fund for regional coordination. If I were planning a trip to a region, it would be good to deal with each of the museum-related themes.

For the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, that need for distance training could be tested with

volunteers. We could tell them about the themes of the 150th anniversary. It could provide a kind of common approach that you could provide to your visitors, while still preserving the regional angle on the ways things were experienced at the time.

We do not have to reinvent the wheel, as they say. Personally, I am looking for a solution, something stimulating, an immediate test, rather than a thick document that, at the end of the day, is not going to be used.

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: New media could allow us to reach people where they live. We have briefly talked about marketing and communications campaigns, but the trend in museums at the moment is what we call transactional. People can be mobilized at home through social media. They can even help museums conduct research on the works of art or artifacts that they would like to see exhibited. Perhaps that would allow people to become engaged. That is what we want. Museums are much closer to the public than they were 40 years ago. People come to museums and want to participate in the museum experience. It's a question of exposing and expressing what matches their own nature.

In the regions, that could be a solution, in my view.

• (0920)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Ms. Bachmann, Ms. Burrows-Johnson, do you share Mrs. Blanchette's view?

[*English*]

Do you think Madame Blanchette was right when she said that for you—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karen Bachmann: Absolutely.

In Ontario, that would work very well. Collaborating with larger museums and with our colleagues could only support our work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go to Mr. Vandal for the Liberals, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your presentation.

[*English*]

It is very important, very interesting.

You mentioned something about a council of indigenous peoples to offer guidance on the future relationships between indigenous people and museums. I've learned that in 1994 a task force on museums and first peoples was summoned by your organization. Could you tell us the highlights of that task force?

Mr. John McAvity: I'd be delighted to.

That task force really turned the page, as it were. It led to a lot of repatriation by museums of human remains and sacred materials. It led to a lot of co-management agreements. It led to a training program being set up for aboriginal people in museum studies, and it led to the creation of a number of aboriginally owned, built, and operated museums in Canada. There are quite a few now as a result.

However, that was 30 years ago, and we've been wanting to dust off that report to look at what worked, at what didn't work, the causes of delays, and what's missing. We in fact have a meeting at 11 o'clock this morning with the Assembly of First Nations to discuss our proposal. Our proposal isn't just over the 1992 report; it's also over the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

I recently met with Murray Sinclair, the senator and former chair. He's going to be the keynote speaker, we hope, at our convention. We are also looking at the UN declaration, which was just ratified by Canada a few weeks ago. All of this is in the mix. It is a two-year or so study that will be undertaken, and it's a major commitment that we really stand by. We wanted to share that with you and would be delighted to come back and report to you.

The other point I would like to make while we're talking is that one of the reasons we're so excited by your studying the question of museums is that this has never been done by this committee or any other Parliamentary committee before. There have been studies done on Canadian culture writ large, but that's everything from broadcasting to social media to stage plays and acting—everything. Your study is really from the bottom up. We believe a bottom-up study is going to be far more meaningful. It will be far more focused and practical.

We're not here with ideas and recommendations that are irresponsible. We want to present you with very responsible recommendations. We don't believe that government should pay 100% of the bills for museums. We believe museums should have their resources very balanced. We have before you a recommendation of how we could increase philanthropy and donations to museums in Canada.

These are the kinds of things—

Mr. Dan Vandal: I'm sorry to be so intrusive—

The Chair: You wanted to interrupt to ask another question?

Mr. Dan Vandal: Yes.

We only have seven minutes, and I'd like to get a few questions in.

If I were a tourist in Canada, which I hopefully will be in a few weeks, and I wanted to see the best of indigenous museums, where would I go?

Mr. John McAvity: Well, there is Pointe-à-Callière, the archaeological site. The Six Nations museum at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario, is excellent. There is a brand new Cree museum in northern Quebec, which is a spectacular building and operation. We gave it an award, in fact. There is the U'mista Cultural Centre in British Columbia. There are a number of them all across the country.

In fact, there is a major cultural centre out here on Montreal Road that Douglas Cardinal just designed. It's a wellness centre and

cultural centre, the name of which is on the tip of my tongue and I can't quite get it out.

• (0925)

Mr. Dan Vandal: It sounds as though there are a lot of ideas right in this room.

You mentioned creating conditions for more private donations. Can you speak more about that?

Mr. John McAvity: Yes.

We're looking at a short-term program of matching donations. In fact, we put it to all parties during the election campaign, and one of the parties, the Conservative Party, adopted it, but slightly differently.

We would like to see that. We think it's a practical program for about a five-year period in which donations would be matched. They would not just go to endowments, but to what the priorities may be of that institution. We believe this will double the size of private donations to Canadian museums.

Currently about 9% on average is about how much comes in. In the United States, it's about 40%. If we can take it up to about 20%, I think that will be a very achievable and realistic objective. That's a matching donations program, dollar for dollar.

Ms. Susan Burrows-Johnson: The continuation of your committee's investigation into the public value of museums would also heighten Canadians' understanding about what we do in service to the public.

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I'm going to offer you the floor to tell us what you think the priorities should be for us in the near future.

Mr. John McAvity: We would urge you to do a review of the existing federal strategy and the programs in place. You will find programs that are very well intentioned, and there are great staff behind these programs. They're working with very limited resources and the needs of the museum community are largely not being met.

Certainly the Cultural Spaces Fund is a very focused capital program. Young Canada Works is a runaway success. However, we're turning down 50% of the summer job applications; we can't handle them. We've had to turn down 90% of internships, and now we're expecting an increase to that program; it was in the federal budget. During the election campaign the Liberal Party promised us a \$5 million increase in that program just for museums. We're looking forward to seeing that. That will make a difference.

These are the kinds of priorities and activities that are there. That would be number one.

Number two would be to help us help ourselves. Help us raise more money, create the conditions for more sponsorship and more donations in the community, and help us get the story of Canada out there. Help us save the story of Canada and preserve it and tell the different stories of Canada, because there's not one narrative; there are many.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McAvity.

Now we go to the second round, which is for five minutes.

We start with Mr. Van Loan, sharing with Mr. Waugh.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Thank you.

Madame Blanchette, your museum, Pointe-à-Callière, has arguably become the leading museum of Montreal in a very short period of time. I was wondering if you could comment on how your own museum reflects the changing role and changing nature of museums, why it is becoming such a success, and what that means for other museums.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: It is true that our museum is enormously successful. It's a very unique museum, unique in Canada, I believe, because it is located on an archeological and historic site. The museum spotlights the place where Montreal was founded. The plan is to extend the site from the Place de Youville to McGill Street, which is the place where the Parliament of the united Province of Canada met. That plan is currently being developed.

That uniqueness is one of the factors that makes the museum successful. Another factor is that it is tied into school programs. What we present in the museum is part of the required learning material for school students. So we have an impressive number of students who come to the museum with their teachers to learn how Montreal was born.

Another unique factor about the museum is the use of new technologies in presenting exhibits. It was already a significant factor in 1992, and I believe museums have used the Pointe-à-Callière museum as a model. In 1992, our museum already had an interactive presentation with evocative images, technological images, inside which visitors could participate and ask questions.

The presentation in Pointe-à-Callière is dynamic and uses new technologies to draw the public into a unique and multisensory experience. We go as far as the use of light to engage the public and ultimately to create a space for meditation in the Fort de Ville-Marie where people can relive the experience of the first founders of Montreal.

That is what makes the museum attractive.

• (0930)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'll turn it over to Kevin.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you.

It's interesting, and thanks go to my colleagues for mentioning it. We should have an in-depth review of museums here. We're doing media right now, but we've never done museums in the heritage committee.

You've expanded by 2,100 museums and art galleries in the last 30 or 40 years. You've talked about funding difficulties, but yet you've had massive expansions. Where is it coming from?

Mr. John McAvity: It comes from people who want to do it. We can't control the number of museums. Anyone can open a museum.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm part of one; keep going.

Mr. John McAvity: Oh, are you? Do tell.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's the problem.

Mr. John McAvity: If we had our way, I think there would have been controls on the number of museums. We don't need any more, to be quite honest with you. What we need to do is focus on what we already have. Let's get the proper environmental conditions in there. Let's get the inventories done. Let's get them digitized. Let's get the stories contained in those museums out.

I'm not sure if you've ever been in a museum where they've said, "Oh, wait, we can't take any more people. It's too full." That's not the case. It's not like a theatre. We have the capacity. We have the room. We do need to use it better.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You're right. Every community wants a museum, but really that can't happen. Sharing, as you guys have said, will be the key down the road.

I have one last question, and it's about the increased funding for the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. The CCSF has had a year-long intake. Have you been invited to apply for that?

Mr. John McAvity: All museums are eligible to apply, but so are all kinds of other cultural entities, and don't forget that much of this has matching funding requirements as well.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Okay.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. My goodness, you had only 40 seconds left. That was very efficient, Mr. Waugh.

Now I go to Mr. Breton for the Liberals.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for joining us today to tell us about the state of museums in Canada. I did not believe that I could be so interested in the subject. My thanks to Mr. Van Loan for suggesting it.

In addition, our discussions have also kindled my desire to revisit some museums in the coming tourist season. I am going to invite my friend Dan Vandal to come to my constituency and visit the Musée de l'ingéniosité J. Armand Bombardier in Valcourt. It has just been almost completely renovated. It was closed for six months. I was very surprised that the museum could close and do without income for all that time.

It leads me to the subject of infrastructure. Mr. O'Regan mentioned the increased budget for modernizing infrastructures in our museums.

Ms. Bachmann, just now you said that it was an issue and a challenge because a number of museums have not been renovated in the last 40 years. Clearly, the public's needs have changed. New generations want to see the museums promote themselves differently and adapt to information technologies. We increased the budget envelope to \$160 million. That seemed a lot to me, but if you consider the number of museums that we have in Canada and if you divide the amount by that number, it is not very much. I understand that not all museums need financial assistance. Funds are there but the needs are extremely great.

Could you tell us about the needs you have identified and whether the envelope matches what museums are asking for?

• (0935)

Ms. Karen Bachmann: If I may, I will answer in English,
[English]

because I'm going to get a little passionate about this.

I come from a site where we have been in the community for 40 years. Our museum actually is a community museum. We're also an old national exhibition centre, which was created in 1972.

Our community decided that even though the federal government abandoned the project in 1999, we would continue with it. We were very happy to putz along with our lovely little site, but we had a major problem with it in 2009. We had a mould problem that actually caused us to close for four years. We travelled around the community with the collection, sitting in various arenas and different sites, which caused me to go very grey and all those wonderful things, but we were able to reopen. The community itself really saw the importance of the museum. There was a lot of press. Locally and regionally, the community wanted this piece still to be there, so we came back.

To make a long story short, we're actually applying to the Cultural Spaces Fund, hopefully for that June 30 deadline, to look at expanding our site. The process has been very welcoming. It's been very...I'm not going to say "simple", because it hasn't been, but it's been very easy to apply. I encourage other museums to take advantage of it at this point in time, because there is a willingness to work with museums.

We thank you for that. It's something that I think is really useful. The new criteria in terms of what is available for museums within the Cultural Spaces Fund is encouraging. I hope that continues.

It certainly won't solve everybody's problems, but it is a nice little safety valve for those of us who need things like HVAC controls that need to be rejigged. We're looking at additional space for the community and at working with other partners in the community to bring in that community. I think the Cultural Spaces Fund will be of benefit. There's a huge influx of money this year, and I hope that will continue onwards. I know there are lots of other pressures, but it will help museums, and I encourage everyone to use it.

Thank you.
[Translation]

Mrs. Manon Blanchette: I just wanted to explain why the needs are so urgent compared to what they were.

It is true that new museums have been created in the ecomuseum style and that they are very attractive to the public. That said, apart from restoring and maintaining the buildings, both of which are indeed expensive, we have to consider that the clients of museums have changed a lot.

We still have school kids, just as we had 40 years ago, but we are also getting older clients. Museums must adapt to those clients and make sure that people with reduced mobility can get in. That is very expensive. Things like elevators have to be installed. We cannot just consider those with disabilities, but also people who are blind, for example. We have to have programs available that really make museums accessible to people like that.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Nantel, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

You are right, Mrs. Blanchette. I am thinking about the Mariners' House, which has impeccable access and a big elevator that takes you directly to a wonderful observation deck.

When Mr. Rivard appeared, he also told us that museums have moved from being about objects to being about subjects, ideas. It represents that perfectly. In addition, the connection between museums and education certainly guarantees long-term success. Kids go there and tell their parents about it; then they go back on the weekend with their families. It is fantastic.

Mr. McAvity, you mentioned coordination meetings that you want to organize with the indigenous community. That is a very exciting idea, I find.

We have already said that this is an exploratory study and that we could eventually undertake one in more depth. Under those circumstances, do you believe that the link with First Nations' history should be one of the themes in an in-depth study on Canada's museums?

[English]

Mr. John McAvity: Absolutely. We'll look at policy issues at one end, but we also want to be very pragmatic as well. Why are aboriginal people not more engaged in museums? Are they coming to our museums to not just see themselves but to see other cultures? Are we charging admission fees to them? Is that keeping them out? We don't know what the roadblocks are.

How do we get more aboriginals employed in our museums? Why is there not an aboriginal director of a national museum or a big museum in Canada? These are the kinds of issues that we would like to address, in addition to the United Nations declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and what reconciliation really means.

I had a very interesting conversation with the director of National Association of Friendship Centres. Some 75% of aboriginal people are living in cities, and friendship centres are very important cultural facilities and meeting grounds. He had a very interesting perspective on reconciliation in the full sense of the word, so we see museums as having a role to play and we want to engage with indigenous peoples. Let's get this and let's do it right. It's time.

• (0940)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I think that is very brave of you. As I see it, you are one of the first groups from Canadian Heritage to propose the plan in a concerted and determined way. The Pointe-à-Callière museum has made a lot of room for the First Nations. I imagine that resonates with you too, Ms. Bachmann and Ms. Burrows-Johnson.

Would the communities where you live agree with establishing a better partnership? It certainly would be appropriate. When you talk to First Nations people about the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, their reply is that they have been here for much longer.

Do you feel that their point of view would complement it, Ms. Bachmann?

Ms. Karen Bachmann: Absolutely. We are making a little bit of progress these days. We have begun to establish relationships with the Cree from Moosonee and Moose Factory in the north. We are also working with people from Attawapiskat First Nation, who come to our communities. We are starting to develop programs, but in collaboration with them, since we consider them as our partners.

It is a small first step. Any encouragement from the Canadian Museums Association or the federal government would help us a lot.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Ms. Burrows-Johnson, we wanted to look at the situation in small museums. As part of that, would it help you if we studied the matter by including the First Nations perspective?

[English]

I can speak in English.

Ms. Johnson, I'm asking you, as the study is focused on small museums, would it be useful to you if we added a study working specifically from a first nations angle?

Ms. Susan Burrows-Johnson: I think it would be very helpful. The Galt Museum and Archives brought in, with some British universities, the Blackfoot shirts. It was very important to the young people to work with the elders to understand. I was told it was like having a textbook from the past to be able to see those shirts that came from one of the prestigious universities in England.

I think it is very valuable to my community, which is located beside one of the largest reserves in Canada, to understand the

aboriginal culture, but it is also important for the young people to understand their own culture and where they came from and what they stand on.

I think we have issues around the mental health of our aboriginal peoples, and I think the government is addressing them, but I think that participation in understanding and standing on one's culture is very important. I would absolutely invite that investigation.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm sorry to cut you short. Thank you very much.

I want to ask you, before we end, a question about marketing. I think Mr. Van Loan—whom we should thank for this study, by the way—asked you a question about marketing being one of the problems you face. I know there is a problem in getting digitization going because of the expertise needed, but that would be a good way to do tourism marketing. You could have little digital samples that show what your museum does, so that when people come into Canada, they might head to a small museum in a small place because you titillated their interest by putting something in the window for them. It wouldn't cost as much to do that.

How do we get a fund to build that expertise and maybe even to have a visiting specialist come into different small museums and assist them in going digital? Would that work? How would that happen? Is there such a beast?

• (0945)

Mr. John McAvity: There's not such a beast, but we would probably be the organization to lead that process. We would be delighted to lead it. That's close to our mandate.

Stories that are in museums need to be unlocked. You're absolutely right that they can be done in quick little vignettes.

We also provide a number of programs that we haven't really mentioned today. For example, we give a free pass to every new Canadian when they're sworn in. It's now administered by the Adrienne Clarkson foundation, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, but the genesis of the idea was with us. It's the same thing with Syrian refugees. In fact, I attended an event here in Gatineau just a couple of weeks ago. It was a very moving event to see the smiles on the faces of these people who have gone through such a miserable time.

We're there. That's our role. Our role is to open doors and to share the stories and the magic and the reality of what we have in our institutions. We don't want locks on the doors.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming today and for sharing with us their expertise. Hopefully out of this will come a recommendation that we may need to dig deeper, but we will see. It's up to the committee to make that decision.

Thank you for coming.

Now I will suspend for a minute or two while we go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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