

Minister of Canadian Heritage
and Multiculturalism



Ministre du Patrimoine canadien
et du Multiculturalisme

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0M5

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE TWELFTH REPORT OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE ENTITLED: MOVING FORWARD—
TOWARDS A STRONGER CANADIAN MUSEUM SECTOR

JAN 16 2019

Ms. Julie Dabrusin, M.P.
Chair, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Dabrusin:

Pursuant to House of Commons Standing Order 109, the Government of Canada is pleased to respond to the Twelfth Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (the Committee), entitled “Moving Forward—Towards a Stronger Canadian Museum Sector,” tabled in the House of Commons on September 18, 2018.

The Government of Canada would like to thank members of the Committee for their hard work in developing the report and for the effort put into crafting the recommendations therein. The Government is grateful to the individuals and organizations that appeared before the Committee and shared their insights and expert opinion on the Canadian museum sector.

The Government recognizes the importance of Canada’s museums to the preservation, awareness, understanding and celebration of our cultural, artistic and scientific heritage. Museums are uniquely positioned to play a vital role in social inclusion and in reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and they contribute to the economic vitality of communities across the country. The Government is also keenly aware of the challenges faced by museums and other heritage institutions as a trusted source of information in the digital age, and in meeting the expectations for engagement of an ever more diverse public.

In the current fiscal year (2018-2019) the Government of Canada is investing an estimated \$396.6 million in museums and related types of heritage institutions in Canada. As is the case with other levels of government, its primary responsibility and fiduciary duty is the family of museums and collections it owns: \$218.1 million is allocated in total parliamentary appropriations to the six national museums and \$119.7 million to Library and Archives Canada. Collectively, these institutions represent the heritage of the entire

Canada

country, provide leadership to the nation's heritage community, and are accessible to all Canadians, in person, through loans and travelling exhibitions, and online.

The Government also directly invests \$48.6 million in grants and contributions solely to non-federal museums across the country and an additional \$1.2 million in special acquisition grants to federal and non-federal designated institutions. It also spends \$9 million to provide expertise, training and services to the entire heritage community through the operating budgets of the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Canadian Heritage Information Network. Significant indirect financial support is provided in the form of tax incentives that support the acquisition of important cultural property worth, on average, \$192 million each year in exchange for approximately \$33 million in foregone tax revenue, and through the Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Program, which saves Canadian museums and related institutions an average of almost \$1 million annually in insurance premiums.

The Government has carefully considered the Twelfth Report of the Committee. The work it represents is important and has been taken into consideration. The Government is taking, or will take, actions that support many of the directions set out in the Report.

Our response to the Report will address the recommendations put forward by the Committee by grouping them into the same four themes contained in the Report: 1) Finance and Revenues; 2) Human Resources; 3) Collections and Infrastructure; and 4) Other Challenges. The most significant of the Committee's recommendations is that the Government conduct consultations and modernize Canada's museum policy. Recognizing the importance of ensuring that decision-making on federal support to museums reflects the modern challenges faced by those institutions, we agree with the Committee's recommendation.

The Government remains committed to supporting Canada's museums in their efforts to preserve our heritage for future generations, and to provide unique opportunities for Canadians to engage with it, and with each other.

Sincerely,



Pablo Rodríguez
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism

GOVERNMENT REPOSE TO THE TWELFTH REPORT OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE ENTITLED
“MOVING FORWARD—TOWARDS A STRONGER CANADIAN MUSEUM
SECTOR”

The Government has considered the Committee's report and the recommendations it has made, along with the views expressed by those individuals, institutions and organizations that appeared as witnesses during the Committee's study. Careful analysis has shown that some of the actions and financial support advocated by the Committee are already being undertaken or are available. The Government agrees that more work remains to be done, and agrees to explore many of the Committee's proposals.

1. Finance and Revenues (Recommendations #1-8)

Museum Policy

The Government considers the most far-reaching recommendation made by the Committee is that the Government revise and modernize Canada's museum policy. There have been two previous policies, in 1972 and 1990. The latter policy had three broad objectives: fostering access to, and enhancing awareness, understanding and enjoyment of heritage; encouraging the development, management and preservation of significant and representative collections in all regions of Canada; and enhancing excellence in museum activities through support for research and development, and assuring service throughout Canada. Those objectives remains valid – access and preservation, in particular, continue to be cornerstones functions of museums - and continue to guide policy and program decision-making.

However, the Committee's recommendation reflects the fact that the public policy environment, the context in which Canada's museums find themselves, and public expectations of the nature of engagement with those institutions have changed significantly since 1990. Examples of those shifts include: the advent of the digital age, bringing new opportunities for museums and public access and engagement; the ever-expanding diversity of the Canadian population and the need not only for museums to reflect that evolution of Canadian society, but to play a role in fostering inclusion; and modern approaches to engagement with, and representation of, the Indigenous Peoples.

The Government agrees that its approach must also reflect those modern realities, and that the time has come for a modernized policy statement to guide future federal program and investment decisions. The Department of Canadian Heritage has engaged in a variety of discussions with stakeholders, and with the Canadian Museums Association, over the past two years on a range of policy and program issues. Most recently, roundtable

discussions took place in summer 2018 focusing on Indigenous heritage, digitization and the digital environment, and diversity and inclusion.

The role of the Government of Canada toward support for non-federal museums in comparison with other levels of government and the private sector is also a key policy issue, and the Department has monthly meetings with culture and heritage representatives of provincial and territorial governments. The valuable input from these and other discussions, such as those during annual meetings with provincial museums associations, will aid the Government in determining what additional consultations will be warranted as part of a policy review.

Funding

Several of the Committee's recommendations, seen in this context, would represent significant changes in federal financial support to non-federal museums. Given that decisions on those proposals should be informed by the Government's role, it would be premature to take a firm position on the funding-related recommendations in question in advance of a modernized federal museum policy. Those recommendations will, however, be carefully considered during the policy review.

Simplified Processes

In the meantime, however, efforts are being made, and will continue, at simplifying the funding application process for museums. Work is already underway to simplify the application and budget forms for the Museums Assistance Program, and it is anticipated that this objective will also be supported in the longer term by the Grants and Contributions Modernization Project of the Department of Canadian Heritage. That project, also already underway, will simplify, streamline and modernize grants and contributions operational processes, tools, systems and reporting. As is acknowledged by the Committee, any such efforts will particularly benefit smaller institutions.

Tax Measures

The Government will continue to explore whether the federal tax benefits available for donations to charities (including museums) are appropriate and effective. It will also undertake further research through the next iteration of the Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions in 2019 as a preliminary step to studying museum admission fees and their impact.

2. Human Resources (#9, 10)

The Government acknowledges the need to ensure the sustainability of the museum workforce through training and other capacity-building tools for staff and volunteers, and to facilitate, on an ongoing basis, the entry of new additions to that workforce. Research has revealed that most of the training activities recommended by the Committee are

already taking place, and there is no indication of a lack of trained individuals available for employment in the museum community. Training for museum volunteers is also widely available.

The Government is already playing an important part in ensuring the future sustainability of the heritage workforce: investment through Young Canada Works creates over 2000 summer jobs and internships each year in Canada's heritage institutions.

The Government is also already supporting training efforts recommended by the Committee, through funding and through direct partnership with the museum community. Over the past three fiscal years, for example, the Museums Assistance Program has supported more than 500 initiatives providing opportunities for museum workers to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and practices. The Canadian Conservation Institute and the Canadian Heritage Information Network are internationally recognized centres of expertise in conservation and conservation science, and management of museum collections data and related issues, respectively. Both offer, either directly or in partnership with provincial museums associations, training and tools (including online training) in their respective areas of expertise, including digital and copyright issues. It would not be appropriate for the specialized mandate of the Institute to be extended, as recommended by the Committee, into areas of general museum-related training that are beyond its expertise. Additionally, 40 post-secondary institutions across Canada offer museum-focused programs, from diplomas to doctorate degrees, and 29 of them offer internship opportunities or include internships as a mandatory component. In addition to training offered by post-secondary institutions, there are more than 44 other Canadian organizations that offer training courses for museum and gallery professionals, ranging from management courses to specialized conservation programs. Eight provincial museums associations offer certificate programs to employees and volunteers that are delivered in-person or online.

While additional efforts by the Government in this area appear unnecessary, it is worth noting that collaborative efforts within the museum community, such as a common curriculum to be used by provincial museums associations, are eligible for support through existing budgets and programs guidelines in the Museums Assistance Program, and the Government would be pleased to assist stakeholders in further exploring such possibilities.

3. Collections and Infrastructure (#11)

The Government has made significant investments through programs that support museum collections management and infrastructure needs. Over the past three years, for example, the Museums Assistance Program has supported 65 projects related to collection documentation and 80 projects related to collections storage. The Canada Cultural Spaces Fund is the other primary source of funding for projects related to infrastructure, and over the past five years has invested more than \$90 million overall in heritage institutions.

4. Other Challenges (#12-15)

The Government is committed to promoting diversity and social inclusion, and museums have an important contribution to make in such efforts. Increasing collaboration by museums with local communities and exhibitions that reflect the diversity of those communities will allow the heritage of all Canadians to be better understood, appreciated and celebrated. In order to provide the encouragement recommended by the Committee, exhibitions reflecting diversity and collaboration with local community groups will be assigned a priority for funding in the Museums Assistance Program. Similarly, encouragement for museums to pool resources in certain areas is currently available through funding, for example, in collaborative marketing activities through the Canada Cultural Investment Fund Strategic Initiatives Component. The Government will continue to explore other options to facilitate collaboration, particularly among small museums, within existing resources levels in the Museums Assistance Program.

The Government is also committed to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and to implementation of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The Department of Canadian Heritage, through the Museums Assistance Program, has already provided initial seed funding to the Canadian Museums Association to allow it to begin implementing Call to Action #67 and undertake the recommended national review of museum policies and practices to determine their consistency with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It will continue to work with the Association to provide further support for that initiative within existing resource levels.

Conclusion

As the Committee observed in its Report, museums, and the role they are positioned to play in service to society, have evolved considerably over the past decades, and in Canada's multicultural society, they have a unique contribution to make to the lives of Canadians, in preserving, understanding, and sharing our stories. The Government of Canada is committed to supporting Canada's museums in partnership with other levels of government, the private sector, and individual Canadians. The Government would like to reiterate its thanks to the members of the Committee for their work, and agrees that the time has come to revisit its policy towards museums, in order for it, and future decisions, to reflect the needs and challenges of what it mean to be a museum in Canada in the 21st century.