



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 021 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, June 9, 2016

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, June 9, 2016

•(0845)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Unlike the name tag, my name is Larry Maguire, vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I just want to welcome our witnesses here and welcome all the members of the committee.

This morning we're here to begin a study on Canadian museums and study the state of Canadian museums. We're very happy to have the Department of Canadian Heritage here this morning to give us an outline of the issues that you feel strongly about and give us an overview of the Canadian museum program.

With that, I'll turn it over to the witnesses. There are 10 minutes for your presentations, and then we'll follow that by rounds of questions. I'll let you begin.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley (Executive Director, Heritage Group, Department of Canadian Heritage): Good morning. Thank you very much for the warm welcome.

I'm the executive director of the heritage group at the Department of Canadian Heritage, and with me today are Guylain Thorne, who is the senior director of heritage policy and programs, and Kathryn Zedde, who is the senior analyst and manager of policy and legislation.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the committee on the state of local Canadian museums. We would first like to place museums in the context of other Canadian heritage institutions.

[English]

We had planned a longer presentation, so we're going to just go through the first part of our presentation, which gives you some context and some factual information. The second part of the presentation is really focused on the programs and services that we provide. You have this information here, and we're happy to answer any questions that you have about our programs, but I won't focus on that this morning.

If we may, we would first like to situate museums in the context of heritage institutions more broadly.

If you turn to the second page of your deck, you'll see the breakdown of non-profit heritage institutions in Canada. When we speak of heritage institutions, we're referring to 2,600 archives, art galleries, historic sites, museums, and zoos and botanical gardens.

We will focus mainly on museums, which make up about 55% of those institutions, and not-for-profit art galleries, which make up about 10%. Together they make up about two-thirds of the heritage institutions in Canada.

I'd like to clarify that many institutions have more than one function. For example, many museums are also archives. When we survey them—and we'll speak a bit more about survey in a moment—we ask them to identify their primary purpose, and that is the basis on which we classify them.

On slide 4, you'll see a portrait of where the heritage institutions, and more specifically the galleries and museums, are located across Canada, and how they're spread. As is typical with other parts of the world of culture in Canada, we are challenged by a massive amount of land and a relatively sparse population. You can see from this map that the heritage institutions are noted in black, and the red figure is the percentage of the total of museums and galleries across the country.

As you can see, in some cases there are significant regional differences in terms of the population of Canada, and in some cases it's quite close. In our department we look at everything in terms of the regions, because this is how we distribute our programming. British Columbia and Alberta, for example, make up together about 25% of the population, but they comprise about 25.4% of museums and galleries. The situation elsewhere in the country, though, varies quite a bit.

The slide on the following page looks at visible and non-visible activities of museums.

Only the part of this iceberg that you see above the water is what is visible to the public: public participation, presentation of collections, the celebration and commemoration aspects of museums and galleries, and the physical and digital infrastructure that you might see, for example, in the facility or on the website.

There is a great deal of work that goes on behind the scenes in terms of the protection and preservation of the existing collections, knowledge transfer and expert training, research and policy development, developing exhibits, and so on. Those are the non-visible aspects for the public. Generally speaking, we find that museums tell us that it's more difficult to raise money for the kind of activity that you see below that waterline.

Of course, there are all the administrative aspects of running museums as well—managing human resources, both paid and volunteer—and all of the issues relating to building maintenance.

On the eighth slide, you will see some general information about our second Government of Canada survey of heritage institutions. This survey was conducted in 2015, and it's based on data that is from the 2013 year. Before launching our own survey, there was very little in the way of comprehensive information about heritage institutions in Canada. We had been relying on Statistics Canada's annual survey of heritage institutions; however, it did not capture institutions with revenues below \$50,000. That comprises quite a significant number of museums in Canada, so it was not capturing a wide swath of small museums.

●(0850)

We have conducted two of these surveys to date.

[*Translation*]

This survey has become an important tool to inform our program planning and policy work. The survey also provides individual heritage institutions with information about the context in which they operate.

[*English*]

It's become a very important tool to inform our policy and planning work, and it serves other levels of government; national, provincial, and territorial museums; and museum professionals, academics, and others. It provides individual heritage institutions with information that can situate them in the context of their peers.

Page 7 outlines a selection of data about museums and galleries specifically taken from the survey. We have taken the data from the heritage survey, which I believe you have seen and been briefed on, and we have done a special report on the situation facing museums and art galleries in Canada.

We can provide that survey to you. It's not yet available publicly on our website, but we have made it available to museum associations. We're happy to provide you with copies of it. It will refine the data a little bit for you and will help you to look at the situation in each province and territory. If you're interested in that, we can provide it.

Concerning the figures you see here, because it's our second survey, we're asking a bunch of quite standard questions coupled with some new questions with each iteration. The survey has a very high participation rate, so we're quite happy with the reliability of the data. It's significantly better than what we had from Statistics Canada. It's all done in-house.

We know, for example, that museums and galleries in Canada are protecting nearly 51 million artifacts. Visits in person are up 21.6% from the last reporting period; that's an additional 7.6 million people. Online, visits are also up, almost 32% from the last survey.

Volunteers have also increased 10%; however, we know that while the numbers are up, volunteers are providing slightly fewer hours. Museums tell us that there is a trend and that this is because their volunteer workforce, which outnumbers their paid or contracting workforce by about three to one, is an aging volunteer workforce. That's a challenge for them.

●(0855)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Ms. White-Thornley, you have a minute left.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Okay.

One significant change that we are unable to explain is that membership in museums and galleries has declined significantly since our last survey. It's down about 64%.

The next few pages just look at the revenues by size of institution. In all of our data you'll see that we break it down by small institutions—those with budgets of under \$100,000—and then the medium-sized institutions, those from \$100,000 to \$1 million, and the large, which are considered to be anything above \$1 million. You can start to see the disparity. We've broken this information down in terms of revenue sources for museums of these sizes and expenditures as well.

I'll conclude my time there and turn it over to you, Mr. Chairman.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you very much.

We'll begin the round of questioning with Mr. Breton.

This will be a round of seven-minute questions and that, for our witnesses, includes the answers as well. I'll try to let you know when there's a bit of time left.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

My thanks to the witnesses for the information on the state of museums. You have taught us a great deal about the topic. It is unfortunate that you did not have time to conclude your presentation.

I think you still had a lot of information to share with us, but you had only 10 minutes. In fact, you had only just started talking about governments' financial support to museums. I see that federal support is between 7% and 19% of revenue, depending on the museums' size. They receive provincial and local financial support as well as the entrance fees.

Could you describe the trend—because it is still a good source of revenue for museums—in terms of visits to museums in the past five years? What are the statistics on that? Do they show an increase, a drop or a stable number of visitors? Could you give us an indication of the situation?

●(0900)

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes. Thank you for the question.

First, I would like to say that a number of museums

[*English*]

do not charge admission. The majority do, but some do not, and some provide free-will offerings. I've seen great debates among museums about whether or not they should charge admission as a source of revenue. Some small museums find they are able to get a greater amount of money if they allow people to offer a donation.

Visits are up. Physical visits are up about 21%; these are in-person visits. People certainly are continuing to go to museums for the in-person experience. There has also been a significant increase in online visits; they're up about 32%. Our most recent survey results show about 36 million visits in 2013, the most recent year for which we have statistics, and about 83.7 million online visits.

Many people, of course, are doing both. They'll go to the museum and will use their smart phone while they're there to look up more information about a particular exhibit or they will check out the museum online before they visit it, but there certainly are a good number of very robust in-person visits. Some of the museums are seasonal, of course, so they have visits only at certain times of the year.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Okay.

One of the major missions of heritage institutions and museums is to conserve and protect our heritage. Could you tell us what the current state of museums is, as a lot of museums are aging? We clearly need the proper infrastructure to protect the heritage across Canada. Do you have any data on the current state of the infrastructure? What requests could those institutions make to upgrade and be up to date?

[English]

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We know that about 72% of all the museums and galleries in Canada are 40 years old or more. Many are starting to experience significant needs for upgrading of their infrastructure or for major repairs. We don't have a comprehensive survey of the physical state of all museums, nor of the state of all the artifacts.

Capital repairs are happening all the time. About half of the museums and art galleries in Canada are responsible for the capital costs of their buildings. This is a significant part of their expenditures.

One of the programs that our department delivers is called the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, and it provides an opportunity for museums and art galleries to upgrade their facilities in a number of ways, whether it's through the purchase of specialized equipment to care for artifacts or whether it's for the physical upgrade of the building or construction of new facilities.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you.

Do I still have a little time, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): You've got another minute and a half.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you

Ms. White-Thornley, could you name the most significant challenge facing Canada's museums right now? In your discussions with your colleagues from the museum industry, have you identified a primary challenge?

[English]

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Museums generally tell us that their most significant challenge is to have adequate operating funding. They are challenged to fundraise. They can only charge so much for admission fees because they are essentially a public good. They struggle, as do many not-for-profit organizations, with the cost of running their businesses and creating compelling exhibits to bring people in and keep their audiences interested. With all the other needs they have to serve, whether it's caring for artifacts, ensuring that the health and safety costs are met, digitizing artifacts, or creating compelling virtual exhibits to bring more people in, most of them tell us that their basic challenge is to ensure that their revenues address the expenditures and do more than just the basics.

• (0905)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you, Mr. Breton.

We'll move to Mr. Van Loan.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I will start by asking if you could provide us with the results of that recent survey the department conducted. Our researchers have referred to it a bit in the documents they prepared for today; however, a copy of the whole thing, I think, would be very helpful for us to have.

One of the big divides in the museum world in Canada is between museums that have a full-time professional curator and those that don't. My experience in talking to them is that you actually learn the most about museum challenges by talking to those that don't, because they are the ones dealing with all of the issues in the toughest ways.

As I understand it, that is one of the thresholds, though, for the museums assistance program. You have to have a professional curator for it, which locks out all these smaller community museums. Could you tell us the rationale for that, and if you think there is merit in considering to expand that program to also allow grants and contributions to non-curated museums?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: I'm going to turn that question over to my colleague responsible for the museums assistance program.

[Translation]

Mr. Guylain Thorne (Senior Director, Heritage Policy and Programs, Department of Canadian Heritage): Thank you very much.

I would like to make a clarification.

[English]

I can answer in English as well.

Just for precision, to meet the requirement for eligibility in the museums assistance program, we're talking about one full-time staff person for the year. That doesn't necessarily mean it has to be a curator per se, but it has to be a full-time staff person for the museum.

I don't know the origins of the facts for the program, but it was just to make sure that we deal with some sort of professionalism when we're dealing with museums. Also, because the program probably cannot fund everything, we need to establish some criteria to make sure that the program is appropriate to the size of the needs.

On whether that could be removed, with regard to dealing with other museums, two years ago we added a little component under the Exhibit Circulation Fund that allowed these museums to borrow artifacts from the Museum of History and the War Museum. In terms of eligibility for borrowing from those museums, they didn't meet the requirement of having a full-time person working for the museum.

It's just for a very small part of this program that we've opened up a bit. I think we look at the needs for the borrowing of artifacts. There might be museums in Canada that are in a position to borrow artifacts but don't necessarily meet the criterion of having a full-time staff person.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I'll say in passing that with many museums being seasonal or focusing on just Friday, Saturday, and Sunday traffic, sometimes having a full-time person just doesn't make economic sense if they want to make ends meet. I will say that.

Does the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund have any minimum criteria or threshold for who will be considered?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes, it does once again have minimum criteria as well. I would say the challenge is that with fixed amounts of funding, in particular when we are talking about the museums assistance program, which has a total budget of about \$6.7 million, without thresholds we would simply not be able to meet the demand or to process in anything like an efficient manner.

In terms of the Cultural Spaces Fund, the main requirements are that they must be incorporated not-for-profit arts or heritage organizations operating in a professional manner, and they have to have a historically demonstrated track record, so we require at least two years of operation.

In terms of the minimum thresholds for staff, it is the same as the MAP, I believe.

● (0910)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: So they get locked out.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: The threshold is about the same as for the museums assistance program.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Again, while you're talking about how to apply money judiciously, sometimes it is in those places that are being locked out where a few dollars can make the biggest difference

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: —whereas you're targeting money at places that need a lot of dollars to make a difference. I simply say that in passing.

One of the programs of the department that I have heard gets very high marks is the travelling exhibitions indemnification program. That is something museums appreciate. It makes a big difference. Most of them say it works very well. Certainly the bigger art galleries and so on say that.

I have heard, though, from some smaller ones that they have occasionally had challenges getting answers soon enough about whether their travelling exhibits will be insured. As a result, they've had to go out and get private insurance and then swap it out at the last minute, but that's still a cost to them.

Do you have any comment on that observation I've had people share with me?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: The indemnification program is a complex business, partly because many parts of the exhibit come together at the last moment. As you know, that's a program for high-value exhibitions. There is generally a minimum threshold of \$500,000 for the value of the exhibit, and the government can assume liability of up to \$3 billion at any one time.

The challenge is that most of those exhibits come from out of Canada. Our obligation in processing those files is to ensure that the exhibit is as safe as possible, so that there is no damage to any one part of the exhibit. In doing that, we have security requirements that must be met, environmental standards that have to be met, and so on.

We have been able to be flexible with some smaller museums in the past. In particular, I think of places that aren't usually the recipients of special exhibitions. Last year the Magna Carta travelled across the country and went into some places that had not previously received valuable exhibit material. The value of that exhibit was high. It's a combination.

It is true that sometimes notice comes late in the day, but it's generally reflective of the fact that some of the exhibits...It's easier with a turnkey exhibit, in which everything is coming from one place. It's much more challenging when an exhibit requires sometimes hundreds of individual agreements with lenders, the details of which come together late in the day.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you very much.

Mr. Nantel, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

My thanks to the three witnesses for joining us this morning.

Ms. White-Thornley, when your presentation was interrupted, you were on page 9 of your document, which clearly talks about the ratios of government financial support, donations, and so on. That graph allows us to see that provincial governments and the federal government are very committed in the funding.

I will ask Mr. Thorne the question. Ms. White-Thornley and Ms. Zedde, I could then give you my remaining time so that you can share the content of your document. I want to give you time to go over it, because I think your contribution to this study is key. You are here to tell us what you are doing to support museums. Then we can meet with people, ask questions and determine whether needs are being met.

Mr. Thorne, do the provincial culture ministries, including the Quebec culture and communications ministry, have a co-operative relationship?

Is there a coordinated approach in some areas?

• (0915)

Mr. Guylain Thorne: At our level, we don't have a lot of contacts with the provinces and territories. Of course, in terms of programs, we are always trying as much as possible to complement the work that has already been done. For instance, Quebec already has a number of museum programs. It also provides a lot of funding for the activities. In our programs, we focus on the other aspects that may help museums. Clearly, we understand that the provincial funding is being used to compensate—

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Do you feel that improved co-operation would be more productive?

I imagine that grants are being accumulated to be able to fill gaps, but that there are not always multiplier effects and growth generators from one program to the next.

In your view, could the situation be improved?

Mr. Guylain Thorne: No one can be against motherhood and apple pie, or improved co-operation in this case. I think that's very clear.

With the provinces, especially in terms of heritage, the levels are completely different. It depends on the provinces we are working with.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

Page 16 of your document mentions the museums assistance program. The briefing document provided by the analysts includes a very good question. Question 6 asks: "How many heritage institutions on these 2,600 receiving funding through the MAP?"

I think the answer to this question is on page 16, which says that 58% of museums have received \$3.8 million.

Am I understanding the figures correctly?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Let me clarify this for you.

Actually, only 115 projects have received funding. There are almost 1,600 heritage institutions and art museums. That's the number of projects that have been funded. It is a small proportion.

However, I would like to make a clarification.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Actually, you can continue until my time runs out. I invite you to continue with your document. I think that's important for everyone.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: I would like to specify that

[English]

Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, there are no minimal staff numbers for that. I wanted to be precise about that.

I'm trying to think of where I left off. I think I left off at around page...

Mr. Pierre Nantel: It was page 10.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Thank you.

There's a mistake, I believe, on your copy. We were doing this late last night, and we had a typo in the amount of provincial support. It is 45%, that's correct, but the number should read \$291 million and not \$219 million.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: It's \$291 million.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes, exactly.

This page breaks out the support. I think it's getting to the heart of what you were asking, Mr. Nantel.

The kinds of support we provide differ between the various levels of government. With regard to the federal government's portion of support, the vast majority of that goes to support the operational costs of the six national museums. Most, or a great deal, of the provincial and territorial money goes to support the operations of local and provincial museums.

For the programs that we have, of the \$229 million the federal government has, about \$184 million of that is for the national museums. The remaining money is other federal money, about half of which is for the programs of the Department of Canadian Heritage, but there are also other sources. For example, national defence finances its own museums—about 50 of them across the country—Industry Canada provides some money to the major science museums across the country, and Parks Canada has historic sites, etc. The money comes in various ways, but the majority of the federal money goes to the six major operating museums.

• (0920)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): You have one minute remaining.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Are these monies that are coming from various ministries in the 35.5% of the support that comes from the federal side?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That includes heritage and other ministries.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes, exactly. It's federal support.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Page 11 of the deck shows you that we've broken it down by the size of the museum, and you can see where the operating expenses go. What you'll see is that it's a labour-intensive business, and this speaks to the challenge I was asked about earlier, in that because it is such a labour-intensive business and because there are fixed facility operating costs, this is where the major challenge is for museums. So much of their resources has to go into professional contracts, staff, management of the facilities, maintenance, and so on that it doesn't leave a huge amount of money for experimental work or for new exhibitions and so on that they would like to undertake.

Page 12 outlines the federal role in museums.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): Thank you, Madam White-Thornley.

We're going to have to move on to Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you very much. I'm really excited to be subbing in on this committee for the day.

I notice the study is focusing on local and community museums. In Oakville and Burlington, which are my communities, we have two small galleries: Joseph Brant Museum in Burlington, which celebrates the famous Mohawk who settled at the head of the lake, and then Oakville Museum, where we have a fantastic permanent exhibit about our ties to the underground railroad. According to your charts, it would be classified as a medium museum, but I find that a bit of a stretch. Its budget is \$500,000, so I think if you asked anybody in our communities, they would say it's a local museum.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: The only one of those four I could reach yesterday when I found I was subbing was Oakville Museum. The person there said that 80% to 90% of their funding—and it's typical across Ontario—is municipal. The balance is mostly provincial, with a very small portion being federal.

That's quite a bit different from your charts. I'm wondering if small museums like that are not being differentiated from perhaps some of the bigger ones.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Speaking to your first issue about the classification of sizes, the distinction we're making when we... We are assuming that when you talk about local museums, you're generally speaking about museums in what we classify as the small and medium sizes. These are thresholds that have been used for a long time by, for example, the Canadian Museums Association. We divide them as we do just so all of us speak the same language.

There are so many that are much smaller than the museums that you're speaking about. They probably do look small in the context of a place like Oakville, but in much of rural Canada there are organizations that operate on less than \$50,000 a year.

Ms. Pam Damoff: One of the things he said was that even for them—

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: —they really have difficulty fundraising. It's not like a ROM, where you can get subscribers—

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Right.

Ms. Pam Damoff: —and do fundraising, so they absolutely love your Young Canada Works program. Out of their budget, they get \$7,000 a year for that. That's a program they would love to see expanded, because he said that a number of students who have gone through that have gone on to get careers in museums. It's a fantastic training ground. I don't know if there's ever been any consideration to expanding that.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Actually, in the most recent budget there was an announcement by the government that they are expanding the youth employment strategy, and that will result in another approximately 125 internships this year for museums across Canada.

If the museum you're speaking about receives \$7,000, it was probably because that would have been an internship rather than a summer job, but we do support an extensive number of students for summer jobs through museums of all sizes, including the museums that Mr. Van Loan referred to earlier, those that are just seasonal in nature.

Ms. Pam Damoff: The other comment I got is that you have an excellent education exchange program. They could partner with a museum in France—

● (0925)

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: —but there's no opportunity to partner interprovincially. His suggestion was that for a museum like Oakville Museum to send someone to France is costly, but there are also opportunities within Canada that would be great to partner with. I put that out as a comment.

Then there is also the issue of the types of programs they are able to apply for. Travelling exhibits, he said, are fantastic, but they are not able to apply for something that would be more of a blockbuster exhibit. He felt some of the granting restrictions make it very difficult for a smaller museum like that to apply for the grants.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: I'm not quite sure what he means when he talks about difficulty applying for a blockbuster. The access component under the museums assistance program provides funding for the development of exhibits, if they want to develop one. If they want to bring something in, we provide up to \$15,000 for museums across the country to help them with the financing costs or the travel costs.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I only have 10 seconds left. I was just going to say they went from a—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Larry Maguire): You have seven minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Oh, I have seven minutes. I thought I had five. Hey, wow, this is awesome.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Pam Damoff: In terms of charging fees, they used to charge a fee, and their revenue went up when they stopped charging a fee, because they found that it drew people to the museum. It is by donation when they go through.

What other kinds of supports do you provide for museums like the Joseph Brant and the Oakville Museum and the galleries?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: In addition to the programs we have, the museums assistance program being the main one, we also have infrastructure support, and those museums would be eligible for infrastructure. They would also be eligible.... You mentioned Young Canada Works. We also have something called the “strategic initiatives” component of the Canada Cultural Investment Fund. It is a program that enables partnering with other museums of similar size or with other partners, either regionally or nationally. It is aimed at helping them improve their fundraising, their business practices, and so on. This is another avenue.

We also have two special operating agencies, one called the Canadian Conservation Institute and the other called the Canadian Heritage Information Network. The Canadian Conservation Institute doesn't provide funding. It provides services. It can provide training services for the museum, sometimes in person, sometimes online. They also preserve very important artifacts. We do calls for artifacts and treat some of the most important artifacts in Canada.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Are there any funding opportunities to partner with educational institutions, such as colleges?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Not under any of our programs.... There is a program called building communities through arts and heritage, to which museums and educational institutions can apply for very specific celebratory activities and so on.

In many of our programs, you can have partners of all kinds of different types, but it is the museum, the heritage institution, that is the eligible applicant. If your museum wanted to partner with the local school on something, depending on what it is, it could be eligible.

Ms. Pam Damoff: They did a fantastic one with Sheridan College on black history for Black History Month, celebrating the settlers who came to Oakville. That was one, but I think they got provincial funding for that one.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Actually, that one sounds familiar. It might have received.... I will have to check on that.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I think it might have received some from you, actually.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: I think so too. It sounds familiar, but we fund so many that I don't have....

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's okay.

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Thank you.

I think the time is up, Ms. Damoff. Thank you very much.

Now we go to the second round, which is a five-minute round. We go to Mr. Van Loan of the Conservatives.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I just had one further question. A lot of the smaller museums tell me that one of the big things they could use help with is training on how to maintain and display artifacts, as well as proper storage and conservation and so on. I know you have the Canadian Conservation Institute. Are their services or knowledge—it says here “expert advice”—available to all museums, regardless of their status? If so, I think there is a challenge there in making smaller museums aware that this service is available to them, if that is indeed the case.

● (0930)

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes, actually the museums assistance program and the Canadian Conservation Institute combined funds to support the Ontario Museum Association to conduct a major program aimed at...almost training the trainer to help spread best practices for museum storage.

That has been identified as a major gap, a major need, for museums across the country. Under MAP, we can provide up to \$50,000 toward storage solutions in individual museums. That program has been modelled on an international program, and it is also being videoed so that it can be available as widely as possible to organizations across the country.

For exhibit displays and so on, some of that programming is for training done by the Canadian Conservation Institute, which offers training to museum professionals across the country through workshops and training sessions. We are trying to get into more videoing of that so that it can.... Some of those small museums just can't afford to send anyone to a conference to learn how to do that kind of work. We are looking at moving into the area of videoing more and more of our training services so that they can be online.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: How well that information gets transferred is an area we have to work on.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I turn it over to Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): In my city of Saskatoon right now, we have a major project going on. It's the Remai Modern Art Gallery. It's going to be over \$100 million. Now we've had another spinoff in our city, a children's museum. We're trying to raise upwards of \$30 million to \$50 million. You can that see right now in my city, we have \$150 million going to art galleries.

The volunteers right now are split, because we have two major projects going on. Now we have professional fundraising groups going on as well. Could you talk about that aspect of it? As you know, we're short of volunteers, so people often hire a professional fundraising group to raise the money.

How does that look? In my city there has been some dissension about this. Thank you to the former government for coming forward with much-needed funds, but the costs have escalated dramatically in this project.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Typically professional fundraisers come in to the non-profit world for major capital infrastructure projects, which is what you're talking about. We don't see that very much in smaller infrastructure projects. Usually the local community does that kind of work itself. It's often led by the board.

In my experience with major capital, you almost always have to engage professionals, because there aren't dedicated staff for that kind of function. Generally, though, big institutions might have a foundation associated with them that is very experienced at fundraising. They have the in-house capacity, but as you're discovering, for projects of that size in a community the size of Saskatoon, I can understand why they would probably have to hire the external expertise.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: The only thing I'm going to say about your presentation is that the decline in memberships of 64% is dramatic.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Have you looked at why? To me that would be a flag.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We're puzzled by it as well. We don't know what to attribute it to.

We can speculate, but we don't have any good information on it. It might be a question to pose to....

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Don't you think it should be posed?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I think we need to find out why the membership in this country has gone down by almost three-quarters. Do you have any suggestions about how we're going to reach out to people?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Compelling programming brings people in. It's just one of the many challenges that museums have. Their programming and their relationship with the community drives membership.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Who takes the lead on that?

The Chair: Mr. Waugh, I'm very sorry. Perhaps this question can be picked up a little later on.

Mr. Vandal, for the Liberals, you're next.

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

I'm looking in our briefing note at your Canada Cultural Spaces Fund. You went from \$63 million in 2009-10 to under \$20 million in 2011-12. You increased it to almost \$25 million last year, and I understand that in budget 2016 there will be an additional \$168 million over the next two years.

What are your priorities? How will this be administered? Will it be available to all the museums all over the country? How will this money be invested across Canada?

• (0935)

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: The budget of that program is typically about \$25 million a year. It can fluctuate from year to year because of the multi-year nature of some of the projects. Sometimes with construction you have variables, and something might slow down.

The additional investment announced in the last budget amounts to about \$80 million a year for infrastructure capital. The funds are being delivered through our regional offices across Canada. It's part of the current government's commitment to social infrastructure.

They've made some changes to the eligibility criteria. For example, the cap on that program used to be a maximum of \$10 million, but the average project was much lower than that. I used to be responsible for that program in a previous job, and at the time about \$500,000 or \$600,000 was the average because it funds specialized equipment as well as— .

Mr. Dan Vandal: We only have five minutes, so I'm going to cut you off and move on.

I have a specific question. Will the funding be allocated geographically so that it's not all swallowed up by Ontario and Quebec?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We always make sure that the funding is distributed as fairly as possible.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Pardon me; I didn't hear you.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: In the department, we always try to make sure that there is a good spread of projects across the country. It's a challenge when you have big amounts in one year, though, because you need things that are shovel ready.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Shovel ready. Yes, okay.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: But the ceiling has been raised to \$15 million.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Where is the biggest need in museums across Canada? Specifically, we're talking about smaller museums. Do you have any information on that?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: No. I think you would really need to speak to museums. I think most museums would say that they're in need.

Most of the smallest museums are found in the most rural areas, of course, but there is a significant spread across the country. Newfoundland, for example, has a huge number of small museums. Atlantic Canada as a whole has a significant number of small museums, and they have challenges. Many of them are seasonal operations, so they're not open year-round. They depend a lot on tourism, weather, and so forth, so there are variable conditions.

Mr. Dan Vandal: The city of Winnipeg must have at least 12 to 15 smaller museums. Some of them, such as the one in my ward, Saint-Boniface Museum, have quite an impressive collection of Métis artifacts, things associated with Riel. Others, which I won't name, have large collections of.... I'm not sure if they're artifacts or just old material. How do you accredit them? What's your role in the accreditation of museums?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Well, we don't accredit museums.

Mr. Dan Vandal: You don't.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We don't have a role there. That's why we establish professional standards as thresholds through which to access the program. If it is a not-for-profit organization that calls itself a museum but doesn't employ professional standards to operate a museum, that's the cut-off point. These standards mean that they have to classify, properly store, house, and display their objects, which requires professional staff. Those are cut-off points for accessing our programs, but we have no formal accreditation program.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I also know some museums that do very good work and don't have paid staff other than for summer programs. Are they not eligible for...?

Actually, they've been complaining to my office that they're not getting the funding that they used to. Do you need paid staff in order to access, for example, the Young Canada Works program?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: No, not for Young Canada Works. That program has a component specifically geared toward museums of the type you're describing, small museums.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Okay.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: However, it's very competitive. There's a lot of demand in that program.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Vandal.

We'll go to the New Democrats. Go ahead, Mr. Nantel.

● (0940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Vandal, thank you for coming back to the main topic of our study, the state of Canadian museums, by focusing on local museums.

We will have three exploratory meetings and we'll have to agree on whether we want to tackle this topic and, if so, from which angle we want to do it. Hundreds of museum representatives will want to come to tell us how difficult their situation is.

I have a very relevant question about the young Canada works program. Ms. White-Thornley, from page 17 to the end of your presentation, you mention various programs. In your view, which ones will best meet the needs of small regional museums? The young Canada works program, especially during tourist season, is certainly the most popular, but are the other programs well known? Should we talk to the various museums?

I will wrap up with a comment from the various remarks made by Internet music providers. I am the first to say that we are slow to go digital and to transition to the new technologies. For their part,

museums have placed great emphasis on making their collections and works digital. In the iceberg diagram on one of the slides, we can clearly see that everything below the water must go on, even though the works have been digitized and made available on the Internet.

Does that program also meet the needs of small regional museums? We will soon hold two meetings on this topic. In your view, what challenges will those small museums be facing?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: I will start by answering your first question.

[*English*]

You asked which of our programs best serve the small and local museums, did you?

Young Canada Works certainly does. The museums assistance program does, especially the exhibition circulation fund, is a very useful program for them. The aboriginal component also helps small aboriginal organizations, and what we call collections management can also help small museums.

Through moveable cultural property grants, we have a fund of up to \$1.2 million with which we can help organizations of virtually any size. As long as they can store an artifact in the right conditions, we will support them to purchase material that becomes available on the international market if it's very important for them or if it's something that has been subject to an export delay and is in danger of leaving the country—say, military medals that belonged to the ancestor of someone whose family is present in the community. If they want those, we can help them buy them. It doesn't matter how small they are.

Also of use to small museums are the training services that we provide. We provide funding for training programs that will help to teach them how to digitize their artifacts. This is in-person training or online training.

We talked about the Cultural Spaces Fund, and it can also be useful, but I think the principal question the committee is trying to grapple with may be about the museums that really are so small that they don't meet the minimum professional thresholds. We have very few programs that address those museums. Our programs are primarily aimed at those that meet the minimum standards of professional museums, because the bulk of our money goes to support the national museums and the other money that we have supports those that fall above a certain threshold. Young Canada Works is the principal program to help those that are below that threshold.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: May I ask you if that has always been the case? Was Heritage more ahead of its time early on, a few decades ago? Have cuts maybe affected your capacity to steer the milieu, to give good advice? Are you just supplying support to the demand? Do you still have some know-how, some knowledge to provide oversight? Can you still transmit this?

• (0945)

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We don't provide a huge amount of direct services, except through the Canadian Conservation Institute. That organization has about 60 scientists and professional conservators and so on. What we do fund, for example, is the Canadian Museums Association. We fund a significant part of their operating budget to provide guidance to museums of all sizes across the country.

Our role is primarily as a program delivery organization. We deliver these programs primarily through our regional offices, and we implement policy and legislation—for example, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, the Museums Act, and the Canada Travelling Exhibitions Indemnification Act—through our indemnity program. We don't provide broad direction to individual museums. We're really a policy and program delivery organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Waugh, we're just going to do a little three-minute round.

Oh, you didn't want to finish your questions?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: No, that's fine. Mr. Maguire needs time.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you. I note—

The Chair: It's for three minutes, Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I noted with interest that the Cultural Spaces Fund budget has been increased this year, by \$168 million over the next two years. The budget was just under \$25 million in 2014-15.

Can you tell me how you are going to prioritize, or what your intentions are in regard to priorities in using those funds?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: That program actually isn't run out of the heritage branch, though it does serve heritage organizations; it is run out of our arts policy branch in our regional offices.

In terms of priorities, one clear priority will be aboriginal organizations. As part of the government's objectives, prioritizing support for aboriginal organizations will be one priority.

They will, however, be looking at social infrastructure, meaning infrastructure that benefits communities broadly in both the arts and heritage. Typically about 25% of the Cultural Spaces Fund budget is provided to museums. Arts organizations tend to access that program more than heritage organizations. I don't have a list of the specific criteria, but I could get back to you with it after consultation with my colleagues.

Mr. Larry Maguire: That would be fine. Thank you.

My last question would be in regard to those museums that you referred to in your opening remarks that are under \$50,000, or in that

range—under \$100,000 for sure—and the programs that might be there. I know you've mentioned that the Canada Summer Jobs initiative has increased. I noticed museums in my own area that have taken advantage of it.

You say you have a minimal number of programs, but can you outline what kinds of supports there are for those? There must be an awful lot of museums that are just in and around that \$100,000 range as well.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We look at our eligibility criteria. We don't make a distinction between whether they have budgets of, say, \$70,000 or \$170,000 or \$570,000. We're looking at whether they meet the core eligibility criteria and whether they are proposing a project that is in line with the program criteria and they have the capacity to deliver it. Beyond the core threshold below which they aren't eligible, we don't differentiate between the different sizes per se.

The question is, are they bringing forward a project that they have a reasonable expectation of completing? Have they secured the other sources of funding? Do they have clear results that are going to come from the project that are linked to the objectives of the program?

What the smallest organizations tend to access are the museums assistance program; Young Canada Works, for sure; occasionally grants from the movable cultural property program; very seldom the indemnification program; sometimes the strategic initiatives component of the Canada Cultural Investment Fund; and often the Cultural Spaces Fund. Those are the programs that I would say those organizations access.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Maguire.

Now I go to Ms. Dabrusin, for the Liberals, for three minutes.

• (0950)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Being from a large urban centre, I'm struggling a bit with the word “local” as we're using it, because my local museums are often larger museums as well. I do have some smaller museums. For example, in my riding I have the National Presbyterian Museum, which is open only by appointment and is quite small. I have Todmorden Mills, a city museum that represents our local history. If I think in terms of the museums my children will also go to, often I'll have an Ontario science museum that's right nearby. There's Design Exchange and all sorts of museums that are close by too.

Can you help us with defining “local” in the scope of how we're going to be approaching this study?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: That's a challenge.

We don't use the term “local” to describe museums when we talk about them because, as you said, the Art Gallery of Ontario or ROM might be your local museum. We were looking at it by size of museums.

For the purposes of the data that we've assembled for you, we have given you a financial threshold, which is likely to imply that a museum that is smaller in nature will be local. National museums are the six crown corporations that are the national museums in Canada: the National Gallery, the Museum of History, and so on.

Provincial museums are those that receive provincial funding. It might be The Rooms in Newfoundland or the Art Gallery of Ontario or the ROM. They're primarily funded by the provincial government.

Municipalities often have many small museums that they fund. Municipal museums, generally, are what you might consider local, because their budgets are typically lower, although in a place like Toronto, they might well have budgets well over \$1 million.

A local museum, at least from my perspective, refers to one with a smaller budget that serves a local purpose more than a national or an international or even a provincial purpose. It's about the content. It's aimed at a local audience and it tends to be smaller.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That's helpful to us as we go forward with the study, because as a definitional item, we're looking more at small museums and looking at the budget size rather than whether it's specifically local in terms of where it's located. That's helpful going forward.

I was interested as well when I was looking at this deck about.... I don't think I have very much time.

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I have 15 seconds. All right, if you have any advice for small museums in an urban centre, can you give a 10-second response?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: They have to connect with their local community and be a centre for other activity. They're generally appealing to the local story or something special from that community, such as a person or an event that happened there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank the department for coming and helping to give us an idea about the scope of this study we are going to undertake so that we have an environmental scan of what is and isn't available, etc.

At the last meeting we discussed the idea that the study does not pertain to national museums or to major provincial museums, so beyond that—not national, not major provincial—would you then grade everything else based on the amount of money they spend or what their activity is?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: We could provide you with a list of provincial and national museums, but most museums receive some significant part of their operating funding from the province or the municipality or both, so it's very difficult to define it that way.

I interpreted from the description of the study, when you said you didn't want to include the national or provincial museums and that you wanted to focus on local, that you were going for things that were smaller and that could therefore be looked at generally from a budget perspective.

The Chair: Yes, that's what I meant. Could you give us such a list?

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: Yes. We'll see what we can pull out from our summer survey.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you so much, and thank you very much for coming today.

Ms. Cynthia White-Thornley: It's my pleasure.

The Chair: We'll take a few moments for the witnesses to leave and the next group of witnesses to come on.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Chair, for what it's worth, when I was crafting the motion, my real intention was.... I don't recall seeing not including provincial ones. My real intention was just to exclude the six major national museums. That's what I had in mind.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

• (0955)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (0955)

The Chair: Committee, please, we will resume.

Now we have our next witness, Monsieur René Rivard, chairman of Cultura, which is a group that advises museums. We thought that if anybody could tell us about museums and their needs, etc., it would be Mr. Rivard.

Mr. Rivard, welcome. You have 10 minutes to present, and then there will be a question-and-answer session. When you have two minutes left, I will give you a heads-up so that you can wrap things up.

Begin, please, Mr. Rivard.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Mr. René Rivard (Chairman, Cultura): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone. Since I just found out yesterday that I would be here today, I have no document to submit.

First, I will go over my career. I have worked in museums for almost 50 years. I have been an observer of the museum cultural scene for all that time. I have participated in the creation and renovation of about 250 museums around the world, but mostly in Quebec. About 50 of them are in Europe, including France, Sweden, Portugal and the United States. I have worked in various capacities, either as a museum planning designer—this is the step prior to the work of architects—or as promoter of ongoing projects supporting the architectural or operational plan and developing themes. I have also worked with collections. I have created around 40 permanent exhibitions for museums, heritage sites and other places. This morning, I would like to talk about the development of museums over the past 50 years.

Before the 1970s, we had what I call “the museology of objects”. Let me illustrate with a simple equation. A museum is a building to which collections are added and that has visitors in addition to curators who look after the collections. In the 1970s, a worldwide movement emerged as what was called “new museology”, which led to eco-museums and interpretive centres. The dimensions of the equation then changed. The new museums consisted of a piece of land, not just a building. For instance, in a national park, which covers a large area, an interpretive centre was set up to provide information about the land. Instead of presenting a collection of objects, the centre handles all the heritage assets on that land. Visitors, and often the general public, take part in its development. That’s another level, which I call the “museum of subjects”. So there were both objects and subjects.

In the past 15 years, a new type of museology has developed, which, in my opinion, is the model local museums increasingly aspire to. They are not necessarily major museums, but they are close to their communities and their people. I have called this trend the “museology of ideas”. So we are moving to a much more abstract level, where the museum is, as I call it, a “community museum”. The community museum includes a society and its challenges, in addition to problems that need solutions. The dynamic forces of the public are demanding change. This is why many museums are now talking about sustainable development and climate change. In fact, they are addressing difficult topics, consulting their people and organizing exhibitions. The Écomusée du fier monde, in Montreal, is quite a remarkable example of what can be done at the social level as well as in terms of cultural development and sustainable development.

• (1005)

I have painted a picture of museology as I have seen it over 50 years. In my view, this will enable museums to become development tools that are much more effective than when they were part of the museology of objects. We have seen the museology of treasures followed by the museology of knowledge. We have now reached the museology of development stage.

The general conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) will be held in Milano in July. The theme will be precisely the change in cultural landscapes. In other words, we are no longer looking at objects, but rather subjects. In my view, this is a sign of new tools that museums can use.

In my view, to accomplish this, changes are needed in the attitudes of professionals, in funding, funding sources, the use of new communication and conservation technologies, and so on.

In a nutshell, that’s what I had to say about my view on the current situation.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rivard.

We will begin questions with Mr. O'Regan, for the Liberals, for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Rivard.

[English]

I had the pleasure of sitting on the board of directors of The Rooms in Newfoundland, which houses a provincial museum, a provincial art gallery, and provincial archives. While I didn't get involved in management, nor should I have, as a member of the board and executive I provided some strategic direction. One of the fascinating phenomena that I witnessed over the past 10 years was the growth online, particularly in reaching a younger demographic.

In the 50 years, as you said, that you've been advising museums in this country, how do you see the online aspect? Is it complementary to museums? Is it supplementary? Will museums become places where we store things, but people will view them online visually, or will people use their phones, for instance, in order to acquire complementary information when they're in museums, or will it be both?

I'd like your thoughts in terms of things that you've seen change over the course of time, particularly in terms of digital technology.

Mr. René Rivard: This is a kind of evolution. There has been... with the arrival of computers in the 1980s, we saw many museums experimenting with the new technologies.

My idea on this subject is that all these communication devices you have, your iPhone or whatever, cannot replace the basis of the three-dimensional objects or heritage that the museum or the heritage site can provide. In other words, they should target something that museums have to offer, but in a complementary way. They should be inviting people to come to see those things rather than giving them all the information.

When I plan an exhibition, I always say that there are three levels of reading in an exhibition. The first level is either the works of art or the titles of the major text. Then the secondary text is more informative, and the third level, which is usually hidden, is one that you have to find in other ways, because it's not readily available, and that kindles food for thought.

I think this is where we can come in with this museology of ideas that I was talking about and put in the ideas, because the museum does not have ideas. It collects mostly 3-D objects, but these ideas are linked to these objects, and people sometimes do not see the relationship. This is where this third level of reading is important, and the new technologies help museums in providing that to the public.

It's not an easy task.

• (1010)

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: No.

Mr. René Rivard: Food for thought has to be well dosed, and it has to go to the right clientele.

For example, I worked in northern Sweden with the Lapps, with the Sami community, and we did their national museum in Jokkmokk.

We designed the exhibition of the museum like a reindeer corral. In other words, in the fall when they gather all the reindeer, they make them go around in an area where they turn around, and turn, and turn, and that's the first level. Then traps open up, and reindeer that belong to one group go into one area, or in other words, into one subject. From there they are branded. After that comes the evening, and they have to eat, so there's another loft where they go and feed, and that's the food for thought.

This is the third level. It's hidden from the reindeer for a long time, but when the time comes, the door opens and the food is available. This is the way museums should operate more and more, not just by giving first and second levels of reading the heritage.

Does that answer your question?

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Yes, it does.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: It's quite illustrative and extremely unique.

Let me give you an opportunity.... I will give you a wide berth, because Lord knows where you'll take us. That was very interesting.

Given your experience, and we're talking specifically about smaller museums here, I'm wondering what you see as their major challenges and what recommendations you may have for them.

Mr. René Rivard: Smaller museums have an annual budget problem. This is all across the board in every country. I have not seen many small museums that have sufficient money, because their staff are always thinking about developing new programs and helping children become more aware of things. Apart from that money, I've seen what I call professionalization of museum workers in the last 40 years. When I look at university programs that are given, most of them deal with training in museology that is more adapted to bigger museums.

I don't see training for small museums as being an option. Everybody wants to be a curator at the museum of fine arts, but the places are limited, so they end up on the Gaspé coast in a small museum and what they learn hardly applies because they have heating problems to solve. They have this and that.

There used to be a federal government training program, but it no longer exists. I think the Canadian Museums Association will talk more about it because I was talking with John McAvity yesterday and he was telling me this.

The training is something. The other thing is what I would call thematic planning. Too many museums are talking about the same thing and not really taking one theme that is particular to the region and developing it further, even though their collection does not quite apply to it.

I was always saying that every interpretation centre in the national park system talks about glaciation. Yes, we know, we had a few thousand feet of ice 10,000 years ago. Once you've known that, if you go from Jasper to Banff and have the same story, then there is something that doesn't jibe here, so—

• (1015)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rivard—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I have given you.... Come on, guys.

We have now done a nine-minute piece on this session, but I didn't want to stop Mr. Rivard, who is the most entrancing witness we have had in a long time. I wanted you to keep on. Yes, indeed.

We now have Mr. Van Loan, for the Conservatives.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I first wanted to ask you about the evolution you talked about taking place over the past 50 years. How much of that has been driven by, shall we say, market forces or the need for museums to achieve economic sustainability?

Mr. René Rivard: I don't know. I can't tell you by percentage, but I must say that there are two currents of ideas in the curatorship of museums. Some are quite resistant to marketing forces, because I guess they believe it will make culture the servant of money. On the other side, most managers and museum directors agree that marketing is an important force that should be strengthened. It should be strengthened, however, in my opinion, not only through marketing of the museum but through partnerships between the museum and the region to try to develop cultural tourism.

France does that quite well, as does Sweden. I don't know too much about the western provinces, but I think in Quebec it could be done better, and possibly in the Maritimes, although some good efforts have been made there.

Marketing is not something to be overlooked; it is part of the tool kit of museums. However, there's not enough money in the museum world to do proper and good marketing. I think we rely on the local newspapers. Most museums call in the newspaper man to try to get into the news or to be heard of. They never pay for advertising. They rarely pay for marketing ventures with provincial or other organizations. I think improvement is needed there.

• (1020)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I more or less got the answer there to my next question, which was going to be about marketing and the fact that in all these programs we hear about and in all the government funding, none of it's ever for marketing; it's for everything but marketing.

Going back to the question I asked about changes in the types of museums and what they do, do you think that has been market driven in an effort to drive traffic, if you will?

Mr. René Rivard: On some occasions it has been, yes; in other cases, a little.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I was going to say "in contrast to", or is it the museum gods saying this is how things should be changed?

Mr. René Rivard: Excuse me?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: I said the museum gods, the people who are great experts. Is it a top-down effort or is it market-driven?

Mr. René Rivard: That's a difficult one.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: You've left him speechless.

Mr. René Rivard: I don't think I can answer.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Another question I think you almost came close to, which I was surprised to hear from some of the museums I went to, is that one problem is that there are simply too many museums in Canada. Maybe some hard thought should be given to reducing the number through mergers and simply accepting that some can't go on.

Mr. René Rivard: There are many museums in Canada. When I started 50 years ago, there were half as many as there are today. Many were created in the 1970s and 1980s, especially heritage sites or thematic museums that were developed mostly along tourist routes.

This is a natural phenomenon. If you look at statistics from other countries, you'll see that Sweden, for example, developed over 400 open-air museums in the 1920s. There were not even five million people in Sweden at the time. The Swedes museumize whatever becomes obsolete. They museumized agriculture in the 1920s, following the first one, Skansen, which was developed by Hazelias in the 1890s. Now they're museumizing their industry. They're making museums of glass, of crystal-blowing factories.

We don't have that reflex, but this did not prevent us from developing. The reflex is more for us to save what's local, what belongs to our roots and to our fibres, and try to keep them to show them to later generations.

Do we have too many museums? Yes, for the means we have to preserve and conserve their collections. As you know, most collections are not well preserved. Some objects are lost through bad storage.

What I proposed to the provincial government in Quebec was to create a conservation centre or places where the small museums could send their objects to be preserved, as they do in Norway. Then a change starts. Rather than being bogged down by their obsession with collection, the museums start to go into the subject of museology and the idea of museums. They start to develop more social goals for their museums, rather than just heritage conservation. That has helped.

For example, in Trondheim, Norway, it's unbelievable what they have done in the last 20 years in the museum once the state took away the responsibility of preserving their collection. Norway has only 5.5 million people. Okay, they have money. Oil is making a difference. Still, they have as many museums in Norway as we have in Quebec; in fact, I think they have more, and they're more pertinent than many of our museums.

●(1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Rivard.

Now we will go to Mr. Nantel for the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Rivard, thank you very much for your presentation. I think everyone is amazed at your knowledge and how you have expressed it.

I urge everyone to visit your site, which is wonderful.

It is concerning that you must be an insider to know that you exist despite the fact that you are so active. Personally, I am very familiar with the Musée des maîtres et artisans in Quebec and Pierre Wilson, who is in charge of that museum. You are a revelation for me.

Thank you, Mr. Van Loan. I'm not sure how you have heard of Mr. Rivard, but it is absolutely fabulous to see how inspiring he is.

Earlier, I had this question for the officials from the Department of Canadian Heritage. I mentioned the expertise that needs to be shared. The government departments and agencies are mandated to support development. When it's the industry, it's the industry, but it is important to play a role in the background. When we talk about small museums, which are being studied, we hear a lot about amateurs and people who want to do a good job. In that case, expertise, guidance and recommendations are appropriate. Do you think that people from the Department of Canadian Heritage should go to the ICOM conference, for example?

You talked about your co-operation with the Government of Quebec. Have people like you been excluded from departments? Your expertise is remarkable, but does anyone working for the museums assistance program at Canadian Heritage have one-quarter of your expertise in the field?

Mr. René Rivard: I won't be able to speak to the last part of your question.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. René Rivard: My first job was with the federal government. From 1970 to 1973, I was the director of National Historic Sites of Canada for Ontario and Quebec.

In 1973, the government created Parks Canada, and I became the director of the interpretation and museology service for Quebec. We decided to do things differently because decentralization had taken place. There were three of us at the start and, a year and a half later, there were 35 of us. I recruited the best exhibition directors.

I drew inspiration from an American named Alma Wittlin. She wrote a book, published in 1970, that describes 16 points for improving museums.

Her book contains four very interesting points. In any type of museum expression, three people and three professions must be represented. First, there must be an expert on collections. Second, there must be someone who knows how to put together the exhibition. Third, there must be someone who can communicate, who knows how to write texts and who knows the approach that each audience needs. We don't put stuffed birds all in a row on little tripods if we want to talk about biodiversity, for example, or scientific topics. This inspired me, and we worked with that in mind.

I left Parks Canada in 1980 for personal reasons. The phone started ringing, and I was asked to be a consultant.

In 1978, I had \$6 million for exhibitions at Parks Canada sites in the Quebec region. Look at how much they have today. It's probably close to zero. And all the exhibitions that were created are now falling apart.

● (1030)

[English]

They are falling apart.

[Translation]

The terrible effect of the years took its toll. Unless they are used and shown, the exhibitions deteriorate. It's like an old car that eventually ends up in the dump.

I think that's what needs to be kept in mind.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: You've made it clear that we have moved from museums of objects and museums of subjects to museums of ideas.

Mr. René Rivard: That's not the case for all museums.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I mean that these are big global trends. For example, if we have the Abitibi-Témiscamingue mineralogical museum in Malartic, it would be surprising to find information about democracy in Nigeria.

Mr. René Rivard: Basically, but we can, for example, talk about what the miners earned on the work plan through their demands and the challenges they faced. We can also talk about the challenges that the companies had to face to become prosperous.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I think you have really given the committee some momentum and we are going to refer to a sort of "René Rivard Book" for certain matters.

At some point, our study will move to the recommendations stage. I don't want to take any shortcuts, but I would like to know what approach and what major changes you would like to see in our recommendations.

Mr. René Rivard: I would have liked to have been better prepared before testifying before you today.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I'm certain that every committee member will want you to appear before us again.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Rivard, you can actually submit us a brief when you have more time.

Mr. René Rivard: Afterward?

The Chair: Yes. You can send it to us.

Mr. René Rivard: Okay. I will.

The Chair: Please feel free to finish answering Mr. Nantel's question.

[Translation]

Mr. René Rivard: For me, museums are like people.

[English]

It is the people.

[Translation]

It's their strength that needs to be improved. To do this, you need training and budgets to help them advance, to make their ideas a

reality, to reach out to society and to share knowledge. They should also be provided better conditions for their work and their collections.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That's what the archives program did. There was initial capital to help people to develop local archives. This kind of measure would therefore be relevant.

Mr. René Rivard: Yes, for the archives and for objects.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: It would be a sort of benevolent guidance.

Mr. René Rivard: That said, we need to do more than just collect and preserve these objects and documents. We need to be able to use them and make sure we do more.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: You mentioned the great national vault, like the one in Norway.

Library and Archives Canada is the depository. I think in this case there are 30 linear kilometres.

Mr. René Rivard: Yes, but the museums don't have—

Mr. Pierre Nantel: They don't have access?

Mr. René Rivard: No.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: There's a central vault in Montreal.

Mr. René Rivard: In Montreal, yes, but it's rented, and it's private. And many people would be interested in developing this in the private sector. It would involve ensuring good conditions in return for rental rates. The museums in Montreal use it. We're talking about 70%. The other 30% are used by families who want to preserve their heritage and by companies that also want to keep some items in a safe place. As a society, we have not yet found businesses that can meet these conservation needs. I am throwing this idea out to certain investors.

We tried to create a regional system in Rimouski, and we almost did it. The building owner was very interested, but we lacked funding for the shelving. Specialized shelving was needed both to make proper use of the space and to preserve what was stored. That would have cost over \$150,000, and we did not manage to find the money. Still, the building was available.

● (1035)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Moving on to the museum—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

I have allowed this to be a nine-minute session because, as I said before, our witness is so entrancing.

Next is Julie Dabrusin, for the Liberals.

[Translation]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Rivard, I too visited your website, and I found it very interesting to see all your projects.

Mr. René Rivard: There are a few.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Yes.

You mentioned Rimouski. I see that Rimouski has a regional museum.

Mr. René Rivard: This regional museum does exist, but it has to be relocated because it is much too cramped in the building it currently occupies. It needs three times the space. It does a fairly good job with contemporary art and regional art, but it is also the legatee of the Québec-Téléphone collection, which is one of the most interesting technological collections of telephony in Canada. However, the museum cannot exhibit it or do anything with it because it doesn't have enough space.

We realized this project with the architect Pierre Thibault. We found a site and a regional reserve. In other words, if we created a new museum, we would be creating a secure building in an industrial park where all the objects from all the museums in the region—in particular objects from the Soeurs de l'Assomption and the Lamontagne House—would be sent and properly protected. We would keep a prime space for the public in the heart of the city.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Right.

You have several projects in Sweden and France, but fewer in Quebec.

Mr. René Rivard: Yes. It's more difficult to cross the Ottawa River than it is to cross the Atlantic.

Some voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I have two questions—

Mr. René Rivard: It's the Rubicon.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I am very pleased you did so today.

Some voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: What are the challenges in Canada compared to those that you have seen in other countries? What can we learn from these other countries?

Mr. René Rivard: There aren't fewer challenges elsewhere. They are similar pretty much everywhere. But things vary here.

I have done a lot of work in Inuit and Cree communities. Clearly, because of the cold, it is more expensive to preserve objects at 20 degrees Celsius and at 55% humidity. It costs more than if you were in a place like where the Ak-Chin Indians live in Arizona, where you don't even need a system because the climate is dry. Everything is perfect.

We don't receive government assistance like what France gives its museums, for example. Our structure is mixed and relies a lot on public participation. That's one of our assets that needs to be supported and developed further. That's why friends of museum groups and groups that really want to contribute should be encouraged.

For instance, the Écomusée du fier monde has 2,000 volunteers. These are people in the Centre-Sud neighbourhood, the gay quarter, disabled individuals, people who are illiterate, and so on. Everyone has an impact on the museum and participates in finding common solutions for development within this ecomuseum.

That's an asset. There's a reason why this ecomuseum will be honoured in July at the International Council of Museums in Milan. It was honoured in Dubrovnik last year at what is called "The Best in Heritage".

This ecomuseum is a very small, local museum in a Montreal neighbourhood that has been working for 30 years to improve the situation of individuals through the new museology that I call "museum of citizens". It's an industrial and popular history museum.

The same is true in other Canadian provinces. I am working with academics in Regina, Saskatchewan. The province is developing six or seven ecomuseums in the northern part of the province. I need to go there in October to attend a symposium. There will be a sort of one-week session on how to improve the system to give it more momentum and so that things occur more quickly. When there are a lot of volunteers, the project often runs out of steam. If it takes too much time, people get older and, suddenly, they are no longer involved. There is no next generation. The tools needed haven't been provided and one person hasn't been put in charge to urge on the volunteers.

There are natural caregivers, and there are cultural caregivers. These people take care of society far more than you might realize.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

You mentioned training volunteers, but how could we train the people who work in our museums in Canada? We could offer work to students, for example. There is the Canada Summer Jobs program, but is there something we could do to improve the training of these people?

● (1040)

Mr. René Rivard: Yes.

A few years ago, there were correspondence courses, but they don't exist anymore. They were offered by the federal government, the Canadian Museums Association and a few provincial museum associations. They gradually disappeared but, these days, with the technology that's available, universities offer distance education courses everywhere. It would simply involve creating a system and employing professors. Personally, I would give courses every week if necessary.

Some voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. René Rivard: I would talk to the students or to a museum director in Yellowknife, for example.

It's done informally, of course, through networks that we create among ourselves. However, there could be a structure to bring it all together, a kind of training program, a tele-university or a "tele-something", that would make content available to volunteers, to retirees and to people at home. They could take a course every week, advance and support the director of the local museum. We would create expertise, we would create knowledge. I won't live long enough to see what that might mean.

● (1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dabrusin. Thank you very much, Mr. Rivard.

Some voices: Hear, hear!

[English]

I would like to know where I could sign up for your classes.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Rivard: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I would like to know where I could sign up for your classes, if you did them through distance learning. That is an excellent idea.

I have one quick question I wanted to ask you. It is really a hypothetical question—or not quite, anymore.

You know that virtual reality is becoming a technology that now will be available to us, which means not simply going and looking at something, but being in it. There is the ability to put on these things and be in the space. Would that be something that would be of benefit—the ability to see the three-dimensional components of a museum, for instance?

Mr. René Rivard: Luc Courchesne, from Montreal, the one who created SAT, the Society for Art and Technology....

[*Translation*]

Twenty years ago now, he started creating immersive experiences on 360 degree screens. Then he did them in spheres, and he has always continued with his experiments. His company is now large-scale with IMAX and all kinds of other formats. Given this reality, we realize that one day perhaps we will—

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I hear a cellphone ringing, which means that the meeting is ending.

[*English*]

Mr. René Rivard: Virtual reality....

[*Translation*]

It's coming fast.

[*English*]

The Chair: Virtual reality, yes....

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Rivard: It won't be long.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so very much, Mr. Rivard.

Thank you, everyone.

This was an excellent meeting. I want to thank Mr. Van Loan for his suggestion.

Mr. René Rivard: I want to say good luck to the committee. You have quite some work to do, and I appreciate having met you today.

The Chair: We look forward to your brief, Mr. Rivard.

Thank you very much, everyone.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>