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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): We'll officially start the meeting, and I'd like to welcome a few people in the room. I also want to say we got a letter that the CBC would be here, but they're not, so that's just fine with me. We'll proceed without them, and if they do suddenly come in we'll know why they are coming in, and they are welcome.

I want to recognize a couple of people new to the table. We have Don Ruznak. We have Andy Fillmore and Geng Tan subbing in. Thank you and welcome to the committee.

We also have some U of T students shadowing MPs today, so I would like to welcome them to our committee: Sara D'Ambrogio, ShiaoShiao Chen, Katrina Van Genderen, and Lucinda Hillbert. It's nice to have you with us and, hopefully, you will find it as interesting as we will.

I'll introduce our guests. We have Paul Berg-Dick, consulting tax economist from MEKA and Associates. From MTBA Associates Inc., we have Mark Thompson Brandt. From the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation we have Ry Moran, director, from the University of Manitoba. Welcome and thank you very much for being here.

In addition, we have Shannon Prince who has come on board with us by video conference.

● (0850)

I thought we might start with you since we've had a little trouble in the past with video conference and we wouldn't want to lose you when we have you on line. I will signal when your time is up.

Go ahead, please. The floor is yours.

Ms. Shannon Prince (Curator, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum): Okay, thank you.

Museums are an important part of the fabric of our country, which has more than 2,600 museums, public art galleries, and related heritage institutions, the stewards of our national heritage. Museums have become innovative hubs, becoming more engaged and relevant within our communities. Many Canadian museums have developed social programs meant to engage the public in positive and innovative ways.

Museums help to foster a better understanding of Canadian life, its history, and diverse cultures.

Our community museum is located 15 minutes southwest of Chatham, Ontario, and was one of the last stops on the Underground Railroad. It began in 1849 when Reverend William King and an association known as the Elgin Association, with abolitionist principles, secured 9,000 acres, which were made available to fugitive slaves or to any free blacks who were looking for opportunities for a better life. As a sixth-generation descendant of this community, I am very honoured, privileged, and proud of the rich legacy that my ancestors paved for me so I may continue to tell that rich and amazing story.

There is a very competitive funding process and we, along with other community museums and institutions, have difficulty accessing those funds. There are limited funds in various programs such as the museums assistance program, Young Canada Works, and cost share, or insufficient funds. These programs are viable to sustain lesser known sites but equally as vital in telling Canada's story. These programs need to be reassessed with an increase of funding to assist in the sustainability of heritage and cultural institutions. If we, as Canadians, are proud of our diverse heritage and culture we need to invest for future generations.

I am also the chair of the National Historic Sites Alliance for Ontario, which is a not-for-profit organization that links over 256 national historic sites in the province. The alliance promotes the commemorative integrity and value of national historic sites through co-operative action by site owners, managers, and stakeholders. We are dedicated owners, managers, and stakeholders who work together to conserve and present the rich diversity of national historic sites in Ontario. We have a passionate and energetic board of directors.

For many years, Parks Canada viewed the alliance as a valuable asset and would provide funding for us to host conferences, workshops, and resources. These were valuable hands-on learning opportunities for our members as travel subsidies were also being offered. With budget cuts, we have not been receiving funds from Parks and have been faced with many challenges, but we are still working cohesively to tell that rich, diverse heritage that has shaped this great Canadian mosaic.

The alliance has been neglected by Parks Canada. Parks are not fulfilling their obligations under the Parks Canada Agency Act, which states:

> ...the Government of Canada wishes to establish an Agency for the purpose of ensuring that Canada's national parks, national historic sites and related heritage areas are protected and presented for this and future generations....

The alliance could assist with aligning activities with Parks by distributing information binders to newly designated national historic sites. They underestimate the value we have to promote all national historic sites.

I would like to leave you with one last story about our museum.

At the museum this summer there was a couple from north of Peterborough and their goal was to visit 150 sites, mainly museums, in honour of Canada's 150th. They chose Buxton as their first stop. They had seen *Canada Over the Edge*, which featured Buxton, and also *Still Standing* starring Jonny Harris. They were so impressed that they just had to come to visit, to ring the bell that was sent from Pittsburgh to Buxton in 1850, to visit an 1850 log cabin to touch the hand-hewn logs, and to visit one of the only schools still existing as a school that was built in 1861 by that first generation removed from slavery. That was just amazing.

This is my community; this is my home; and my hope is sustainable funding so my grandchildren and great-grandchildren will also be able to add another chapter to this marvellous book that our ancestors have started.

Thank you.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much, not just for today, but for all you've been doing to preserve heritage and the history of Canada.

I can see the passion you have for it. We really appreciate your sharing that with us.

Next we'll hear from Mr. Paul Berg-Dick.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick (Consulting Tax Economist, MEKA and Associates, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I appreciate the opportunity to come and share some of my background with you. I'm currently a consulting tax economist, with funny letters that come from a variety of places. I've undertaken work for a number of organizations in Canada and have had international assignments. One of those organizations was the National Trust for Canada. Today, however, I'm speaking as an individual. Most of my federal public service career was with the tax policy branch in the Department of Finance. From 1995 to 2003 I was the director of the business income tax division within the department, responsible for all the business-related tax measures. From 2004 until 2009 I was the director responsible for the annual tax expenditure account. That's the account that examines each of the tax expenditures we have in our tax system. I was also the person responsible for our tax relationships with the various provincial and territorial governments.

I thought it would be useful, then, to provide a bit of background and perspective for this committee as you look at heritage preservation. One of those aspects, as I think you'll come to as part of your committee, will be looking at various incentives to encourage heritage restoration and rehabilitation. I think it's really important to take a bit of a broader approach, to think about things in a bit of a more holistic way. That's certainly how we looked at things in the department. There are various aspects in terms of the challenge of encouraging it, and it's important to identify what those challenges are. It's important to identify what those problems are before jumping too quickly to any particular approach that might solve a particular problem or scratch a particular itch.

It's also important to look at a variety of different levers and different aspects of what the government can do, and to frame the importance of heritage preservation in today's society. One of the aspects that I think is important to set out is that heritage buildings provide a real benefit to society. When we see buildings, we see a living history. The benefit to society is really over and above any benefit to the private owners of the buildings. In some sense, the overall social benefit, the benefit to society plus benefit to private owners, is more than just for the people who own the buildings. I think that's one of the challenges when those factors aren't taken into account, when that benefit to society isn't taken into account, because we'll then see less heritage preservation.

In other words, this is an area where government has a role to play, and it's important for government to see that benefit and somehow identify some of the issues relating to that. In some ways, this is similar to how we think about research and development. One of the reasons we support research and development is that any particular firm can't capture all the benefits of research. It's a broader benefit to society.

In terms of the instruments available, there's a variety of them. We're talking a little bit about regulations. There are historic registers. There are rules about what we can or cannot do with heritage buildings. There are also financial incentives, which I think you'll be coming to. I understand that people from a variety of different places will be coming here in the future. I've worked with Chris Wiebe at the National Trust. I think he may be coming to talk to you.

In terms of a framework, one of the approaches is to provide some kind of grant or incentive for building owners to encourage them to carry out preservation activities. One of the issues with grants is that you can apply that to a variety of different owners. It could be commercial, it could be non-profits, it could be municipalities. We have one example from the 2001 to 2007 era, which was the commercial heritage properties incentive fund. It provided funding to a variety of different programs. The grant programs can also be structured as cost-sharing or having a matching element to encourage provinces or municipalities. You can also match funds.

● (0900)

You have a variety of flexibilities in terms of how you would design a grant program. However, grant programs can be criticized because there's only a fixed amount of funds and that involves some bureaucratic discretion in terms of how that would be.

If one turns to tax incentives, there one of the key elements is exactly what kinds of costs are going to be identified as available for a tax incentive. We have a self-assessment system, and we have to carefully define those costs. They can easily balloon if they're not done properly. Therefore, that's of concern.

There are different types of incentives. For example, there's an investment tax credit where you essentially pay for part of the cost. For example, if you have $100 cost and the credit is 20%, then, obviously, you only have to pay $80 and someone else is paying the $20.

There are also measures that will accelerate the depreciation that a company can take. What this means is that instead of having a depreciation over a whole number of years, you can do that in a shorter period of time. That's, obviously, to an advantage.

One of the key issues with tax incentives, though, is that they only benefit those companies that actually have tax to pay. If you're not in that situation, or if you're a non-profit organization, or if you're some other owner of a building that doesn't fall into that particular category, then any particular tax incentive is not going to benefit.

There are some situations where you can make tax incentives refundable, which means that you're going to pay out an amount. Just like we have refundable tax credits in our personal system, you can pay out an amount to an owner. But then a refundable tax credit is very similar to a grant, there's no real difference, it's not really using the tax system other than as a delivery mechanism for a cheque. Again, you have issues about eligibility and in terms of identifying....

Another consideration you want to think about with tax incentives is provinces: do they have a role and are you encouraging them to participate? When you use a tax credit, some of that credit actually flows through the provinces in terms of increasing the provincial tax. If you look at the accelerated cost provisions, if you do anything on that front, then most provinces are forced to come along with that, because we have a series of agreements that say that the provinces follow the federal tax base.

In summary, I think it's important to look at exactly why this is important, what the issues around it are, as well as the how in terms of encouraging more heritage preservation. You can think about financial incentives coming in a variety of different forms—grants versus tax incentives. Both of them have a cost to the government; there's no real benefit going one way or the other, they all will affect the bottom line. On tax incentives, you have to consider the who. Is it just those corporations with tax that can use it, or otherwise do you want to broaden your scope? Consider the role for potential partners, whether that be provinces, municipalities, non-profit organizations, or foundations.

I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thanks for being so timely.

Mr. Moran.

● (0905)

Mr. Ry Moran (Director, University of Manitoba, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation): Good morning. Thank you for having me here.

This is an exceptionally important conversation that we're going to have here, and not only in regard to heritage. What I will be presenting strikes at the very heart of our national identity: what we choose to remember, what we choose to forget, and the essential requirement asked of us as Canadians to preserve and remember a history that is deeply troubling, has been deeply damaging, and will continue to affect this country for generations to come.

I come from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba. It is the mandated agency that flows directly out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself. I was with the commission from the very beginning.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave us 94 calls to action. These calls to action are intended to help set us on a new path, a better path, in moving forward in the aftermath of what the commission has accurately described as “cultural genocide” inflicted on indigenous peoples in the residential schools.

Central within those calls to action are a number of calls related directly to commemoration. Those commemoration calls relate directly to the creation or establishment of a “national memory” and our ongoing need as a country to make sure we continue to shine light into the darkest corners of our history.

I want to talk to you about three specific broad themes in the calls to action. One is the preservation of residential schools that were built. The second is commemorating the residential schools that were standing. The third is the missing children work.

On that missing children work, I feel obliged to acknowledge the severity of this conversation and as well to acknowledge all of those children who never returned home from the schools and who number well into the thousands.

On the first part, call to action 79 discusses the preservation of residential schools. Right now, we have about 17 residential schools that continue to stand in some form or another in the country, but when we look at the quality of those buildings, or the current status, we can see that there's a wide diversity.

Approaching this in a systemic or tiered approach, we might be able to say that there are maybe four tiers of residential schools.

A tier one school would be where the building is currently occupied and is generally in pretty good shape. Examples of that would be the Shingwauk or Algoma school up in Sault Ste. Marie, the Assiniboia residential school in Winnipeg, or the St. Eugene school out in Cranbrook. Those are locations where the residential school has been converted to other purposes. They're still largely intact, and they're occupied and in generally decent shape.

A tier two school might be a school where there is a good building that still stands and is well suited to preservation but is at risk of deterioration or loss. Examples of these schools would be the school down at Brantford, the “Mush Hole”, which was the first residential school in this country, the Muscowequan school in Saskatchewan, or the Long Plain school out in Manitoba. I think what's very important to discuss in regard to those three schools is that each one of those communities has been actively trying to preserve that school in their community, because they feel it is absolutely essential that they as a community do not lose the evidence and that we as a country do not lose the evidence. Each one of them has been frustrated in many regards in terms of being able to access resources or supports in order to preserve the schools. For the Brantford school in particular, we were very close to losing the roof on that building, and of course when you lose the roof, you largely lose the building itself.

Examples of other schools that exist would be the Birtle, Elkhorn, or Brandon schools, which are in more or less derelict shape and are quite rundown now. Then there's a remaining handful of buildings across the country where some portion of the building still remains —perhaps a gymnasium or a dormitory—but the entire site is not very intact.

As a country, we have a very, very important question to answer: what are we going to do with the remaining built residential schools? Also, how are we going to support communities? How are we going to ensure that communities are empowered to have a say and a role in preserving these locations?

It is important to note that currently there is funding offered to communities in some regards to actually destroy these schools. Some communities have taken up the government's offer to destroy the schools. The St. Michael's school at Alert Bay out in B.C. is one school that was recently destroyed at the request of the community.

● (0910)

The second question we need to answer then, once we address the question of the built fabric or remaining infrastructure of the residential school system, is how we properly commemorate the sites that contained residential schools.

If you travel the road between Saskatoon and Prince Albert, you pass through the community of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. There it had a particularly notorious school. That school burned down many years ago. Now it's a simple open field, and most Canadians would have no idea that there was even a residential school there.

Broadly across the country, there are many, many locations like that. The schools have been relocated, burned down, were demolished. There is very little physical evidence that there was a school there. We have to ask ourselves what we are going to do to commemorate those schools that did exist.

I want to present the members of the committee with a small example. As I drive through the back roads of Manitoba, where I live now, nearly every single homestead school, one-room schoolhouse, has a small cairn erected to it in the countryside. If we can do that for homestead schools, I think we can certainly do that for residential schools across the country, given the severity and the nature of the conversation at hand.

Sadly, and perhaps one of the most devastating elements of the entire school system, is the fact that many children did not return from those schools. Across the country, there are literally countless cemeteries where the remains of children lay in the ground in unmarked graves. We do not know who those children are; we do not know the number of those children.

That Duck Lake school, for example, has a cemetery attached to it. We were recently visiting the Muscowequan school with the community. Horribly—to give you an example of what happens in some of these places—there have been multiple instances across the country where crews have gone in to conduct infrastructure work or dig a sewer line and have unearthed the remains of young children at these school sites.

To be very clear, many schools had multiple cemeteries. There are perhaps as many as 400 cemetery locations across this country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was not able to get to every single one of these cemeteries. There is no broad national preservation framework to address these cemetery locations, and these are children we're talking about in these gravesites.

To put a bit of a capstone on that, and respecting the confidence of the community—I won't tell you the exact location—in some areas of the country there are human remains, or the remains of children, that are starting to come out of the ground due to the overall neglect and non-sustainability of the cemetery system across the country.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, in its calls to action, was directed to continue the work of identifying the children who never returned home from the schools. We've been asked to create a missing children register, and there was a call to action regarding some funding for that. We were very fortunate to receive an announcement regarding core funding for the centre, but some of these projects—I have to be clear—are a little bigger and broader than we're able to sustain in terms of our core operations. Not only at the centre, but more broadly as a country, we require specialized strategies to deal with a very specialized issue in this country, and a particularly troubling issue, that presents us with an opportunity to remember.

The positive thing is that we see people understanding. We see that Canadians broadly understand there is an essential social justice element to this preservation work that needs to happen. This is a history that we cannot forget. Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire, the gang from *The Secret Path* that many of you have seen, donated their funds to the national centre. Those funds are intended to be targeted at education and ongoing efforts to commemorate missing children.

We are working up to the point of being able to flow some of those funds out to communities. I have to be clear that it's some money, but it's not a lot of money. The positive thing is that we see Canadians broadly supporting the ongoing efforts, and we continue to receive donations on a daily basis, basically to support this.

There is one thing that I want to leave you with. What we remember, how we remember it, will tell the story about how we confront our future as Canadians. It just so happened that last night, as I was putting my head down on the pillow, I was flipping through the news and came across an example of a former politician in Europe who was convicted of the crime of Holocaust denial. Part of his sentence was to visit five concentration camps and to write a report on what he saw and experienced. We need the built infrastructure in this country to fully document the the cultural genocide that has been inflicted on indigenous families and indigenous children.

● (0915)

We know that we live in a society that continues to deny the harshness of what occurred in the residential schools, and it will only be through preserving some of the buildings and properly acknowledging, remembering, and commemorating those children who never returned home from the schools that we're going to have a fair shot at evolving into the country that I think we all want this country to be.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very powerful, and I'm looking forward to the questioning. You've given us quite a lot to think about there and how we can possibly move forward.

We're going to go to a quick break because we're having a bit of technical difficulty that we will try to get fixed.

● (0915)

(Pause)

● (0920)

The Chair: I will bring everybody back to the table. We have our technical difficulties fixed. Thank you very much for your patience.

We'll move onto Mr. Brandt.

Mr. Mark Brandt (Senior Conservation Architect and Urbanist, MTBA Associates Inc.): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Thanks for inviting me here today. It's a pleasure to share this conversation with you.

I want to talk about a couple of things, but first I would like to provide a little bit of background. I'm a conservation architect and urbanist with a small firm here in Ottawa that does architecture, urbanism, and conservation. I'm involved in a lot of professional and community volunteer activities related thereto. One that is related to today's conversation is The Association for Preservation Technology. We are partnered with the National Trust this year for our annual conference, which is just two weeks away. We have almost 1,000 delegates coming from around the world, primarily Canada and the U.S., to look at the very issues that you're studying. By all means, if you'd like to join us, the invitation is there. Chris Wiebe of the National Trust will be able to help you out. I think he's here today.

I want to start by making a simple statement. I think it's extremely important that wherever members of Parliament can, they find ways to help preserve, rejuvenate, regenerate, and rehabilitate our heritage building stock, our historic places across Canada, and I'm here today to tell you why. I don't want to focus on the socio-cultural dimension. I want to focus on the environmental dimension, but as you'll see as we go through, it's also about economics and the positive impact on economics.

I don't want to leave that economic point hanging. We're involved in a lot of adaptive reuse projects and a lot of other projects for which an owner, a developer, has a piece of property, maybe a block or maybe a couple of blocks of urban property. They are looking to build a 20-storey multi-use complex, and it has a heritage building on it. They say, “They don't want me to tear it down because it has heritage designation. What should I do?” A lot of what we do is to help them understand that in fact it's not an obstacle. In fact, it's a lever. It's a benefit. It's an opportunity for them.

The opportunity comes not just through community goodwill and community benefit—both of those are there—but from purely a crass dollars-and-cents point of view, which is, to be fair, often the developer's point of view. They have a lot of condominium buildings and other buildings going up. Today we are densifying our cities, which is an act of environmentalism in itself and often can be a good thing. The more dense we get, the greater the need for our historic places to be preserved and adapted and reused.

I say to them that there are all these other developments happening in this neighbourhood in this city, and I ask them what's going to distinguish them in the marketplace. It's not just about providing the soul of a place that a heritage resource can give to a new development. It's actually economic benefit through differentiation in the marketplace. We have examples of price points being put up higher simply because of the relationship of the historic resources within that development. Instead of leaving the economic argument hanging, I just wanted to go there, because now we're going to focus a little bit more on the environmental side of historic preservation.

● (0925)

We were asked by a collaboration of federal, provincial, and territorial governments to prepare a document titled “Building Resilience” and subtitled “Practical Guidelines for the Sustainable Rehabilitation of Buildings in Canada”. It started out as a companion to the standards and guidelines document, which is published by Parks Canada document and has become over the last decade or two a bible for Canadian conservation.

I think the standards and guidelines piece has helped galvanize the heritage conservation community, making it stronger and more consistent. It's also given this community the confidence to be a little more flexible in the adaptive reuse and revitalization of our historic places. As long as we preserve the character-defining elements and heritage value that our historic places represent, other aspects of these places can be adapted to accommodate new and different uses. After all, it takes the use of a place to keep it going.

“Building Resilience”, as I said, started out as a companion document to the standards and guidelines publication. It then evolved into a stand-alone, pan-Canadian guidance document for the regeneration of all existing buildings. It's based on the phrase, “heritage conservation contributes to creating a sustainable built environment and resilient communities”. I think that's an incredibly important policy statement. It's now endorsed by every senior level of government in the country, including the federal government. I think that's a good starting point for some of your deliberations as you move through this study.

The document tells us why this is important. I want to remind you that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the global authority on climate change, has been clear in expressing how important existing buildings are when it comes to reaching carbon targets. Heritage buildings are a subset of existing buildings, but they're an important subset.

The document also explains why traditional buildings, our heritage buildings, are naturally sustainable in many ways, and it demonstrates that they carry a lot of inherently sustainable elements within them. In the days prior to the introduction in the late 1920s of HVAC, architects were more like master builders and learned how to provide comfort for the occupants of their buildings without a lot of machinery.

There are a lot of reasons why traditional buildings are already sustainable to a certain degree. I want to highlight two of them. Energy performance is a key factor in all of our environmental standards, all of our baselining, and in everything to do with sustainability. It's important to be focused on these energy aspects, but not hyper-focused.

I should point out that there was an incredible amount of building stock constructed in the three decades after the Second World War, globally and in Canada. As these buildings come of age now, we're facing in the next decade or so a tsunami of modern-era buildings that need to be sustainably rehabilitated. This is something the conservation community has started to embrace. They're starting to find ways to lead in the rehabilitation of existing buildings through the adoption of best practices.

● (0930)

The document has some case studies. I thought I would show you this one; it's a little closer to home. It's just two doors down; the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. It looks a little at what some of those inherently sustainable features are, and it also looks at how careful analysis and supplementary means of updating a building's performance—its comfort performance, let's say, as is the case here—are softer and less expensive ways to rehabilitate the building, and in this case, developing hybrids. There's some sort of historic and contemporary...outside and inside. I think there are a number of sustainability features that were added to the project that ran from 2008 to late 2015. I think many of those things are straightforward but it takes people to advance it quickly. It actually achieved a very high level of sustainability at an international standard. It leads me to ask the question, why don't we do a sustainable rehabilitation of 24 Sussex, bring it to an international level of showcase for Canadian technologies and know-how in sustainable rehabilitation of buildings and preservation of historic buildings and places?

The second last point is that if you were lucky enough to go to Montreal and see the exhibit last year, It's All Happening So Fast, you may have noticed a quote from Dr. David Suzuki. His view is that environmentalism is actually rooted to a deep attachment to place, so you can see that interplay between heritage conservation and environmental sustainability is right there.

Last but not least—

The Chair: I've just given you over two minutes extra, so I really need to get you to wrap it up.

Mr. Mark Brandt: Last but not least, I would like the community to think about historic infrastructure and sustainability as well in terms of the Prince of Wales Bridge, which you may know, here in Ottawa. It's a historic place. Think about how it could be adaptively reused, using a train line that, in fact, reuses 400 kilometres of rail, reuses existing buildings, reuses shipping containers to make stocks, and reuses, in fact, old GO trains.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I hate cutting people off. I know you've travelled a long way, in some cases, to come here and share your wisdom with us. Unfortunately, I have to stick to the rules. We'll get to more through the questioning, I'm sure.

We're going to start questioning with Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): I just wanted to thank each of the presenters this morning.

This is one of those very difficult panels because we have some different topic areas and each one could be a session unto itself. Each of them is very important.

I'm going to start this first round of questioning with some financial discussion. Mr. Berg-Dick, related to some of what you talked about, I was reading a report last night from the City of Vancouver that was commissioned by Donald Luxton & Associates. In that report they were looking at some best practices in Canada and internationally. They talked about what would make a robust financial program to support heritage conservation. On four of their points, they indicated they should encourage historic places through tax incentives, which you touched on. They indicated special subsidies, or that a national conservation fund should be in place; that a good conservation program would include grants, subsidies and loans, and then, finally, rehabilitation loans. Those are some different ideas, and you touched a bit on this.

The report also went on to talk about some examples. They indicated that Edmonton allocates, I think, $877,000 per year for heritage conservation. The City of Victoria, in 2012, put $2.3 million into grants. The federal government, we learned, through Parks Canada's testimony last week, through its national cost share program, has $1 million available, and it's through a grants program. I'd just like to use that as a preamble to throw it back to you. As we try to make some recommendations to government about best practices, what's the right mix here that we could be looking at. On things like the magnitude of heritage that we have represented in Canada, what kind of dollar value could the federal government be looking at supporting through a number of these different mechanisms?

In brief, perhaps I could get your thoughts on what range of tools we should have, and if there's a dollar value that you could give us, that would be helpful.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: One comment I have just on the Vancouver report is, did they miss anything there? They had tax incentives, subsidies, grants, and loans as well. In some ways I think it is important to look at each individual approach. As I noted in my remarks, part of it is who exactly you want to be providing an incentive to, and that will in some ways determine whether you go the grant route or the tax route. They both have a financial impact.

You have more flexibility in the context of setting up a grant program. You see that at the municipal levels. Even in Ottawa there are some small grants available for heritage. We had the federal program for a number of years that, again, went the grant route. Part of it is whether you can work with other levels of government on some of this. Can you demonstrate leadership in some of that?

When you go the tax route, then you are focusing more on commercial buildings as opposed to other sources. What is enlightening is the interest in a variety of commercial operations. People recognize that there is a benefit, that there are occupants who want heritage. Is there an education component as well, in terms of encouraging people to think outside the box and to think about new ways of using heritage buildings?

The challenge too, given that there is a large stock of potential heritage buildings that would be helpful for preservation, is that they can also give a very large bill, so again, that is a concern in terms of focus and what the priorities are. One of the challenges in the tax area is that you have to define all those things up front, and if you get it wrong, if all of a sudden you have defined a very large amount, a large base, much bigger than you expected, you can have a very large tax expenditure related to that.

With a grant program you have a sense as to how things are going. You have better management activity.

Those are some.... It would be helpful to go through them all and to list the pros and cons. The National Trust has done some of that. You may want to come back to that as well.

● (0940)

Mr. John Aldag: Have you any thoughts on dollars? I don't know if you've ever looked at it, but what would be a reasonable amount of financial...? Is there a number? Ultimately we're going to have to ask Finance for something.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: Again, looking at the historic building, the register, getting a ballpark across different provinces as to what kind of level that is and then a percentage of that, if that's your financial incentive.... I really don't have a number.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It is hard for anybody to think of a number, and then, of course, we listened to Mr. Moran's testimony and we can see there is a lot of need.

Okay, next is Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): I have one quick question for Mr. Moran, then I'm going to Mr. Brandt.

Mr. Moran, in your testimony I believe I heard you correctly when you said that there is government funding to destroy schools. I'm assuming you mean to demolish schools, but there seems to be very little money to preserve and protect residential schools. Was I correct in hearing that? If so, could you maybe drill down a little bit more on that?

Mr. Ry Moran: Yes, you heard me correctly. Two examples come to mind immediately. I referenced the St. Michael's Indian Residential School at Alert Bay. That school stood over that community in a very dominating way for many years. It was rundown and it was derelict. It became a bit of a safety hazard for the community. We can understand that the community had quite a bit of distance between that and the school based on what happened there, so it became derelict, and at the time the federal government did offer money to destroy the building. That offer was taken up, and that building was knocked down about two years ago. I attended that ceremony.

We have been working with the Muskowekwan First Nation here in recent weeks, days. They have been offered money to knock down the school. The community feels very strongly opposed to that and also feels there is an absolute need to identify and properly commemorate the four cemeteries that are believed to be on the site. There has been no money offered to preserve, but there has been money offered to demolish the school.

Hon. Ed Fast: Is it your position that the federal government's funding should be directed towards preservation rather than demolition?

Mr. Ry Moran: I think what's really important to recognize is that the relationship between communities and the residential schools is very complex and it's going to change between communities. In the example of the St. Michael's school, it's not for me to say whether that was a right or wrong decision. I would say that was the right decision for that community. I don't say that the community should have held onto that building. It was an essential healing ceremony. It was an essential release. It was an essential way for that community to move forward, on their own journey, to knock that school down and remove it. However, we know that there are other communities that are fighting very hard to preserve their schools and we have to think about supporting those communities in that work.

In addition to just generally commemorating the school locations across the country, those that aren't still standing, I think it's very important that we at least acknowledge where they were and when they were, on a national basis. Actually, in international precedent, there are these things called the Joinet-Orentlicher principles, which say the state has a duty to remember any time there's been a mass human rights violation or atrocity and that is absolutely the scenario we have in this country.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you.

Mr. Brandt, you referenced the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, which is a beautiful rehabilitation of an historic site. Do you know how much that cost per square foot?

● (0945)

Mr. Mark Brandt: The costing is very complex. The cost includes both the hard costs and the soft costs. It was $99 million.

There are so many different elements that go into that, in terms of connecting into utilities and infrastructure; clearing an existing, essentially fallow, site that was beside it; building the addition; and doing the restorative work on the historic place. As you folks know from the facilities that you utilize on a day-to-day basis, I can tell you that there is a lot of infrastructure that's carefully fitted in there, in terms of multimedia, security, and so many different elements that a typical community building wouldn't necessarily have.

Hon. Ed Fast: I just asked that question because it very neatly fits into the broader discussion, which Mr. Aldag started, which is within the context of limited resources that taxpayers have to do this. How do we get the biggest bang for the buck and how do we service a broader subset of communities? We have Ms. Prince, who has just lamented the fact that her community is finding it very difficult to extract any money from the federal government to do a little bit of heritage preservation. While I do not apologize for the renovations that took place in that building, buildings like the Sir John A. Macdonald Building do take a lot of money, if they're going to be done to the high standard of environmental sustainability.

How do we find that balance between serving local communities, smaller communities, and the large projects that we have across the country that will suck tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars out of the federal budget?

Mr. Mark Brandt: Three of the points that I made touch on what I'll call my answer to that. First of all, since we've brought in the established standards and guidelines that are being used across the country now, I think that this has given a higher degree of confidence that we can revitalize historic places and find areas where managed change can happen to them, while protecting the character-defining elements and the historic value. What falls out of that is that it provides an economic basis by having new use. That is a very important first pillar of the answer, I think.

The second pillar of the answer revolves around environmental benefit, in that there are a lot of ways to rehabilitate historic places, so that you don't have to go in and clear-cut everything, so to speak, and put in expensive new systems. If you carefully knit in hybrid systems, you don't have to spend as much money on that. You have to know the building. You have to know ways to do it.

The third pillar has to do with community engagement. We don't tell a community what their heritage is. The community will tell us what their heritage is. If the community values the heritage place that they're looking to preserve, there are opportunities to find ways to use the historic place to serve contemporary needs, but preserve the historic value.

The Chair: Okay. I'm sorry to have to cut that off, but I'm sure we'll continue that discussion through the questioning.

Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Thank you.

And thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I'll start with Mr. Moran. I started school at Chesterfield Inlet in the Northwest Territories. My brother and I were the only Caucasians attending the residential school. The RCMP did contact me a number of years ago to ask whether any of my classmates could talk about abuse. It was a very dark chapter in our lives, which is why I was so proud of the Ktunaxa outside of Cranbrook when they took St. Eugene and turned it into a very positive, great resort.

It was an elder who said they had to take a very bad past and turn it into a good future by using the residential school. They did that through help from other first nations and private sector money. What do you think the government's role should be in perhaps complementing first nations and the private sector in recovering or preserving the old schools?

● (0950)

Mr. Ry Moran: That's an excellent question. I think there is a really strong opportunity for a four-way partnership on this, with individuals, businesses, and provincial and federal agencies coming together to ensure...and obviously, indigenous peoples and governments coming together to preserve these buildings.

I think it's important to understand how all those pieces are going to fit together and that we create a structure that enables success in that area. Our success so far in terms of starting to walk this journey says that there are multiple opportunities. We see that individual Canadians—through the work of Gord Downie and other Canadians like that—are passionate about supporting the preservation of this history and contributing to the roles.

On the specific issue of the missing children, we also know that the provinces bear the responsibility for the forensic or archeological work that would need to happen in order to properly gazette or uncover those sites. There are multiple calls to action for businesses to meaningfully participate in reconciliation generally, and of course, there are specific calls to action for the federal government. The national centre has specific responsibilities in this as well. So there is ample opportunity.

The overall mission for us collectively as a country is not to work in isolation, but to try to find as much synergy in the various systems and the various ways of working together as we possibly can to ensure that we collectively realize this opportunity to build a better country. That's something everybody can participate in, and that's why the TRC's calls to action were addressed not only to the federal government, but also to individuals, organizations, governments, and of course us, as a country.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

Paul, during your presentation you talked about the roles of the federal and provincial governments in heritage preservation. I was mayor of Cranbrook for three years. Municipalities play a very significant role in whether heritage gets preserved or not.

In what ways could municipalities help to be part of preserving heritage at the municipal level?

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: I certainly didn't mean to exclude the municipalities in that. They're a key part as well. They have a role to play, linked to provinces. It's also a question of how best from the federal perspective to lever additional resources that may take you into programs where you're willing to cost share, willing to match funds, or willing to build on the interest in a municipality, the interest in a community—in a way, to have that as the driving force for a program as opposed to just setting it up at the national level and finding a particular type of activity that would qualify.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Do you think it is primarily through grants, or tax incentives, or....?

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: Well, again, with the tax incentives, you don't have the same flexibility, because it will be typically defined at the federal level. Provinces can also define a credit, typically at their level. They don't have the benefits of changing the tax base, because they have to follow the federal tax base in most cases. Quebec and Alberta don't, because they're not part of the corporate...but in most provinces that would be the case. They can do that.

It's the same thing with municipalities. Some of them have looked at ways to do tax rebates for particular projects, to provide an incentive by not having to pay the same level or providing grants. There is a variety of different...that resourcing could be done at the municipality level as well.

I think what would be interesting is if you could lever a dollar of the federal money and generate a dollar of provincial or municipal money for a particular activity. That can give you greater bang for your buck. That's typically done on the grant side as opposed to the tax side. For a tax incentive, typically the federal government determines what the base of the incentive would be, what the rate would be, and then the impact.

● (0955)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Basically, a partnership between all three levels of government would be ideal to preserve heritage.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: It could be, to the extent that this way you'd have the best potential I think to draw on the interests and the funds of all three levels or orders of government. Again, it's part of the pros and cons of looking at different mechanisms. Some allow you to do that. The tax incentive doesn't really allow you that kind of direct linkage into the other side.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Thank you, and thanks to all the speakers for making time to be here today. It's much appreciated, and it's nice to see you again, Ry.

By great coincidence I'm subbing in on this committee today for Darren Fisher. My background is in city planning and architecture, including some preservation. I had the great fortune to lead the process that created downtown Halifax's first heritage conservation district several years ago. That process—where we used your guidelines and standards, by the way, to help us with that, so thank you—led to a conservation district that used matching-facade grants, some deep tax incentives for more substantial work, and alternate building code compliance to allow the reuse of heritage buildings in ways that don't meet the modern code. Therefore, I'm going to focus my questions and remarks on the built environment more than on landscapes or places.

There are plenty of heritage assets across the country, it seems, where this balance of carrots, grants or incentives, can be matched or balanced with the stick of conservation regulation in a way that can help to unlock private capital, and use the market forces to pay for the work that needs to be done, and keep those heritage resources alive and useful.

We also have a lot of other assets in Canada where there is very limited or even no likelihood of private participation. Some of your examples, Ry, I think are in that box. In my work as the MP in Halifax, trying to sort out things like proper funding for Georges Island, or the Sambro Island Lighthouse, I have come across the very instilled mindset in some of the line departments about needing to have a business case to even take on the asset to add it to the list of registered historic places.

What advice can you give the committee or the line departments or the government about understanding that there are both kinds in Canada, and helping to find the appropriate balance of where much higher levels of public participation are required versus more subtle financial taxes or other incentives? You see what I'm getting at. I want to help this committee to make an impression on people who are making decisions in departments that there needs to be that balance and understanding that there are some cases where there's a higher public requirement.

Maybe we could have an open discussion about that.

Mr. Ry Moran: I might just, in opening, say a couple of things about that. I think in regard to the school cemeteries and the missing children work, I believe that there will be individuals who see the value in doing that work and want to participate and want to lend a helping hand. I think we will be able to leverage certain opportunities through partnerships with university-based researchers or something along those lines. I think ultimately we do have to address that problem on a national basis in very close collaboration with the local communities. It is going to require some effort.

On the residential schools themselves, I think it's a twofold approach that we do need to understand. I think there's certainly the potential for a business case to be developed in some of these locations. A very large number of the TRC's calls to action relate to education and the need to have very authentic conversations about this very difficult past that we have in this country. Certainly, in the case of the Brantford school, the “mush hole”, or Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba, they're relatively close to major urban centres. It's not difficult to envision school children and other groups attending those places to have authentic dialogues, and perhaps there's some kind of model there that can be explored.

I think we, collectively as a country, do need to show some leadership in saying that these are important elements of our national history. We need to shine that light into those darker recesses of our history, and make sure that we approach this on a “need to do it” basis, based on where we're trying to get to, rather than perhaps using other frames to understand this challenge and opportunity that we have.

● (1000)

Mr. Mark Brandt: I appreciate the question, Andy. It's not really a question. As you say, we need to have some discussion. I see that there are already some mechanisms in place, which I'll discuss in a second, and which I think we need to build on. For example, Parks and other organizations will make some determinations about historic places that have national significance, that have national resonance, and Ry has talked about a few of those.

Also, each province has people working in its public sector, as you know being from Nova Scotia, who look at what places have provincial significance and resonance for the people and for the whole province.

Other very useful and excellent and meaningful heritage places are very much more community-oriented. Often, they get a lot of the effort, if you will, by individuals within a community to save them. It could be an old bridge. It could be anything. It's an opportunity locally to express something that you want to do.

Your question, the way I took it, is how do we divide it between the different levels of government, and how do we divide it between business and individuals, communities, and the public sector? I think at the end of the day it's always going to be about partnerships. Partnerships have proven to be engines of advancement. We need more people who can pull partnerships together, who can orchestrate partnerships. I think there is a growing industry within the heritage community of the realization of that. I think some of the national conferences we've had recently have focused on that. I've been asked to speak at Newfoundland's heritage conference at the end of next month. When I look at the program, a lot of what they're doing there is talking about business cases for preservation.

I don't think there's any one answer, with the possible exception that there will always be different types, levels, and aspects to historic places that need to be looked at on a case-by-case basis, and that always the strongest approach is through partnerships of the various stakeholders.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Prince, gentlemen, thank you for taking part in this exercise, which I think is important. We can explore various avenues and sectors to make our examination of this file a success.

Mr. Berg-Dick, we all know that the government spends a great deal, yet it is not enough. With regard to heritage, protection measures and the needs are not decreasing; they are increasing. For as long as we evolve and history evolves, the needs will increase.

Based on your experience at the Department of Finance, can you tell me if past investments were maximized?

Was there rigorous reporting?

● (1005)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: In terms of looking at the effectiveness of particular programs, that's one thing we take very seriously in the Department of Finance. It's one reason we have the tax expenditure account in terms of any particular measures that fall on the tax side. It's also why, from an overall government perspective, we want to evaluate particular programs.

In that context, one of the programs that had been put in place—and we have had discussions over the years in terms of whether particular programs should be done through the grant programs or tax incentive programs, and in the end there was a pilot program, the commercial heritage properties incentive fund—which was in place for a number of years, provided grants for particular activities. That was found to be quite successful in terms of its impact. There's a report you can see on the National Trust site, which shows that in terms of the money that was set out, it was able to lever up about another eight times' worth of investment. In the sense of putting money in, it's a challenge to evaluate that, but it's important to evaluate it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Correct me if I am wrong, but in listening to your presentation, it seemed that you are questioning the fact that the tax benefits are limited to businesses and not available to NPOs?

Am I correct in saying that you are fearful of this?

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: What are NPOs?

Mr. Joël Godin: Non-profit organizations.

Is that what you were saying?

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: Yes.

Mr. Joël Godin: For my part, if funds can be raised to enable a community to preserve its heritage, I have no objection to those funds coming from the community, non-profits or businesses.

Why would an entrepreneur want to fund and support those conservation projects if no incentives are offered?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: I think there's a growing appreciation for the value of certain buildings that have historic value and that there's a set of occupants who want to use buildings in that way. I think part of it will be that business people will have to look at a particular case and see whether in fact a business case can be made. I think the challenge in some cases is that they face additional costs. The question is whether, on balance, they'll be able to generate additional rents. There are some situations where that can be used as a way to differentiate your project from others. I think there's a number of different groups that have an appreciation, or potential occupants who have an appreciation, for working in a historic building. You see that in different places. I know personally, from Waterloo, that has been a hub for new ventures, but they're in an older building. I think the challenge is that people want the older building, but they also want class A infrastructure within it; they want to have a good situation to work in.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: My next question is for Mr. Moran.

There was a lot of emotion in what you said earlier. As I said at the outset, there are many needs relating to heritage preservation. You talked about infrastructure, residential schools and schools from the past of indigenous persons, as well as cemeteries. What would your initial preference be?

I will give my opinion first and then listen to yours. I think the first thing should be preserving the memory of the young people in the cemeteries, which means protecting those sites. Then, if the funds are available, we could address infrastructure.

I would like to hear your opinion.

Mr. Ry Moran: That's a good question.

I don't really know if there is a difference between the two. Consider for example children who have disappeared.

● (1010)

[*English*]

That's going to take quite a long time, in order to properly honour that project. That's not a one-year project. It's going to require a lot of community engagement and it's going to require a lot of ceremony. We have to think of a long-term strategy for that. Truthfully, I think it's about 10 years. That would be a safe assumption for now.

In terms of the buildings, though, I think there are perhaps some more immediate steps that can be taken through using mechanisms like Parks Canada, through using mechanisms that already exist. We have to realize that, like most heritage buildings, if we lose certain foundational elements of that building, if we lose the roof, if we lose the foundation, we lose the building itself. I think we have to move quite quickly in coming up with a preservation strategy for these essential components, so it is both.

The Chair: Thank you for that. I gave a little longer there.

Let's not forget Ms. Prince, who I'm sure is wanting to share all sorts of information with us.

Ms. Shannon Prince: I'm fine. I am enjoying listening.

The Chair: Okay, that's awesome. We appreciate you being part of this.

Mr. Amos.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you.

A number of the discussions we've had with previous witnesses have gone to the issue of the distinct challenges that rural communities face in preserving their built heritage, the socio-economic disparities as between urban communities and rural communities.

The riding I represent, Pontiac, is one in which, in the regional county municipality of Pontiac, and also in the regional municipal county of the Gatineau Valley, the average per capita income is $22,000. There's not a lot of private capital there to preserve any built heritage, but that doesn't mean that the heritage that is there, much of which is foundational in terms of the national capital's own success, is any less important.

I want to direct my question towards Mr. Berg-Dick, around what mechanisms, by way of incentives and financing, would be most appropriate to ensure that rural communities are best able to take advantage of fiscal outlays made possible by the federal government.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: I think you've highlighted an important point about any particular program and its impact at a national level, a provincial level, and a municipal or even an urban/rural level. If you look at the distinctions between tax incentives and grants, tax incentives typically don't have that kind of thing built in, unless you get into a very detailed kind of tilting of something. The tax system is not really designed for that.

If, for example, recognizing that there may not be the same opportunities in some areas, you want to direct more funding to particular geographical areas or areas with particular challenges, then you have a better potential to do so, I think, when specifying within a program what kind of allocation you want. Again, there may be an area on the urban side in which there is a great interest in preservation of various buildings. Some things may be happening there that may not be happening in a rural area.

From a commercial perspective, you always want to have projects that are successful. I guess part of the challenge within a rural area is exactly what is available on a commercial basis, if you're going to go that route. If not, what is the community planning to do with that project? What kind of funding is there? It's the mix between commercial use versus other uses versus the educational use and the way you balance these uses and what level of funding you want to have directed towards each one of those different channels within the Canadian context.

Mr. William Amos: To follow that up, I didn't see any written brief from you. Obviously we'll have the transcript of what you said today, but because I think the fiscal outlay aspect of this study is going to be really important, if you have any more detailed thoughts around what the best options are, we would welcome those.

Mr. Paul Berg-Dick: Sure. I think you will have the opportunity to talk with Chris Wiebe about the National Trust and some of the work that has been done in that context. There is some background work there, which he'll be presenting, that has some of those aspects of looking at different grant and tax options and impacts.

● (1015)

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

Mr. Moran, thank you for your presentation. It's an extremely sensitive topic, and you delivered it in an extremely sensitive manner. I appreciate that.

I want to ask on the public record what I asked you privately at our break.

Obviously we are not, in this committee, engaged in a formal consultation process with indigenous peoples. That would be necessary in order to make recommendations for the TRC heritage aspect. What is the extent of consultation that has happened already, and to what degree can this committee rely upon the consultation undertaken by the TRC as regards conservation of heritage from residential school settings?

Mr. Ry Moran: It's a very important question.

The commission was many things, but at its heart what it did was give a microphone to survivors of the residential schools. We gave the microphone to 7,000 survivors across the country. That's how many statements we recorded. It was the largest engagement with residential school survivors in the history of this country.

The calls to action are the roll-up of all the hopes and aspirations of the survivor community and indigenous peoples across the country. That is the authority on which the TRC issued those calls to action. The commission talked to many people and reflected at length on what needs to happen. Those calls to action are directed at all of us as individuals, organizations, and parliamentarians, and of course, as a country.

We know there's broad support for implementing those calls to action. That said, they are not a one-size-fits-all answer. Throughout the calls to action around heritage preservation or around cemeteries, the conversation with communities, with survivors, has to continue. We can't just impose a one-size-fits-all solution on it, but we have to work very closely with communities to make sure that the ceremonies are properly respected, that the distance between that residential school and the community narrative is properly respected, and that communities are fully empowered to tell the story in the way they wish.

In the case of St. Michael's, that might be the destruction of the school. In other cases, that might be the preservation of the school. We have to enable that conversation to occur. That's one of our great national opportunities at the federal level, to enable that conversation to occur.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Berg-Dick, I was very interested in hearing about your work with the income tax division and small business. As much as I would like to ask you about the government's small business tax proposals, I will reluctantly restrain myself, given that the chair will probably rule me out of order.

My question is for Mr. Moran. As you well know, because you've been there and I've been there, I have the—I'll call it an honour—with a lot of difficulties attached, to have the community of Birtle in my consistency. There is a residential school there. Do I understand correctly that we should do whatever we can to preserve every residential school? Could you clarify that?

Mr. Ry Moran: We have to understand the difference between preservation and commemoration. We absolutely have to commemorate every single residential school in this country. That needs to be a national initiative.

In terms of preservation, we have not preserved every single residential school in this country. We have to remember that the remaining 17, in some form or another, are a shadow of the more than 140 different institutions that were recognized across this country. We are down to the crumbs of the system right now. That's where there's a particular sense of urgency around coming up with a strategy to preserve whatever is left.

In the case of Birtle, it's particularly interesting, though, and I want to highlight a particular challenge with that. Over the course of time, as the federal government or the churches got out of the business of running residential schools, some of these properties were divested. That particular school ended up in Kijiji, as I recall, being sold by a private landowner. Some of my colleagues and I had a quick chat about whether we could buy it. It really wasn't all that expensive. It was $100,000, or—

● (1020)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: It was $79,000.

Mr. Ry Moran: Yes, it was $79,000.

The building itself was quite derelict. It was probably a public safety hazard. So what do we do? Do we buy it and then put a big chain-link fence around it and say nobody can visit it because it's dangerous? That is where we need a strategy and we really have to think about how we're going to preserve these places.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I was struck by something Mr. Brandt said. I actually wrote it down word for word. He said, “it takes the use of a place to keep it going.” In the case of the Birtle school, to use that as an example, there can only be minimal use of that place, as I understand it, unless there's massive reconstruction. How do we deal with a school such as that, given the use requirement?

Mr. Ry Moran: We have to recognize is that these are sites of conscience. We hold on to things because we need to do certain ceremonies. In some ways, while it's not a complete parallel, we even have cemeteries so we can go and visit a loved one or someone we've said goodbye to.

We will be trying to figure out this history of residential schools in this country for generations, the intergenerational trauma that has been passed on to survivors, and frankly, the intergenerational trauma that has been passed on to this country as a whole, because we're not healed collectively as a society from this overall experiment that we tried. It will be ongoing, and at the very least, people need to understand that these schools existed, that there is a place to go and see that there was an actual school there. For indigenous peoples, it might be just a place to put some tobacco down and say a prayer. For non-indigenous Canadians, it might be a place to reflect on this history that we have.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: What's interesting about Birtle again, in the town, the agricultural community, there is the Birdtail Country Museum and the local community, the non-aboriginal community, has taken it upon themselves to do what they can to preserve the history of the residential school. I had a very moving visit to that museum and the curator—all volunteers, nobody gets paid—told me about the aboriginal people who go there to look at the records and the emotion that is generated from those records. So in this very tiny prairie community there is a kind of reconciliation going on that is little known, done by volunteers, and the school stands over the county. You've seen it, and it's very conspicuous and tells a story that is quite profound, so I appreciate your answers, Mr. Moran.

I'd like to ask Ms. Prince a question. Can you expand on the shortcomings of Parks Canada in terms of museums and heritage conservation? What are they not doing and what should they be doing?

Ms. Shannon Prince: I guess since we are designated under the Parks Canada umbrella, but we're not owned and operated, that's one of the things that I and the alliance feel has been neglected. It's very unfortunate that they are not investing in us, because when we were first designated as a national historic site there were funds allotted to assist us and other sites to help with conservation, to help with heritage recording, to help with documenting some of our buildings etc. Now that has totally been lost because the mandate has been changed. It almost feels like they are not really turning their backs on the non-national historic sites.... Well, in some way they are, but it's because of the budget cuts. I feel that they need to recognize us under the same umbrella as they embrace their other national historic sites, and parks as well.

Did I answer your question?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes. I have another one for you as well. Do you think that Parks Canada has the in-house expertise to deal effectively with heritage conservation?

I live right next door to a national park in Manitoba, and I find that most Parks staff are sort of natural history, ecology, and environment oriented, as am I. Do you think that heritage preservation is given short shrift within Parks Canada?

Ms. Shannon Prince: I do. I really do, because there are so many parks, as you say, that they are really focusing on, as opposed to the other wonderful buildings and conservation that can be done. Right now they are doing the train station, Union Station in Toronto. That is a national historic site and they have invested in that, but it has taken a long time to come to that.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you. I'm being a little generous because we do have a bit of time.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: Ms. Prince, I appreciate the perspective that you shared as a privately owned national historic site. I'm wondering if you've used a program, such as the national cost-share program that Parks Canada administers, that gives money to sites such as yours. That's what that program is designed for.

What I'd like to know is for a third party site, one that isn't owned and operated by Parks Canada, do you feel you are actually able to take advantage of programs that are out there, such as the cost-share program, and what would you identify as the barriers to an organization like yours in accessing those types of programs?

Ms. Shannon Prince: One of the big dilemmas that we found at our site in particular was the limited funds in that program when we tried to access it. The other one was the fact that you can't start construction, or whatever, until you have funding. Our 1861 school, for example, was in dire need and we needed to do something quickly, and that program we had applied for wasn't going to happen until much later on. So we lost that funding and we had to try to find other sources of funding.

We tried all of those different avenues, but we are such a small community and I think they look at the bigger picture. Because the other places that do apply have better visitation, more visibility, as opposed to this small underground railroad museum in southwest Ontario, it is hard for us to vie for those big dollars against some of the bigger organizations and sites.

We try to do what we can.

Mr. John Aldag: Excellent. I'm glad you're out there trying.

Mr. Moran, you mentioned a couple of times this idea about the 17 existing residential schools. I'm wondering if your organization or anyone has led a discussion with those communities to get a sense of which ones are willing to retain the schools and which ones are wishing to see the last physical traces of them removed from their communities. Has that work been done yet, or is that all part of this work that needs to happen going forward?

Mr. Ry Moran: You heard me mention a couple of specific communities that we are aware of and have had many discussions with that are actively trying to preserve their schools. The Brantford community with the “mush hole”, Long Plain First Nation, the Muskowekwan First Nation—they're very passionate about preserving their schools.

Mr. John Aldag: What about the others?

Mr. Ry Moran: We haven't had a full engagement with all the others, but we have to recognize, too, that we start to get down in terms of quality.

We can start with the St. Eugene example, and Algoma and Assiniboia. There are three schools right there that are sort of preserved and not being used as.... Well, Shingwauk, or Algoma, is being used as a commemorative space and a functional space. St. Eugene has that same sort of dual track. So there are three there, and there are another three underneath that. Then we get into buildings that are in more complicated shape.

I should add that Blue Quills college out in Alberta is another example of a space that's currently occupied.

Then we get into some of these more derelict sites, such as Brandon, Birtle, and Elkhorn. Then we just get into the partial remains. For example, at the Port Alberni residential school, the main school building has been knocked down. The gymnasium and the old boys dormitory still stand. At Kamloops First Nation, the gymnasium still stands. The community has done a lot of healing ceremonies in regard to reclaiming that space, but a lot of the other elements of that building are destroyed.

It's a little bit of a mixed bag across the country, but we're really talking about a very limited number of sites, only a few of which are very suited to actual heritage conservation for public education purposes right now.

● (1030)

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

Mr. Casey wants to jump in, so I'll hand it over to him.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Thanks very much.

I have a specific question. I don't want to address it to anyone in particular, but we're looking for help in my riding.

In Amherst, Nova Scotia, there's a military drill hall that was built in 1915. It's a recognized federal heritage building, but DND has announced that they are going to dispose of the building. The town and the county want to help, but we're looking for ideas on how we can save this incredibly majestic drill hall.

It's described this way on the website for historic sites:

> The Armoury was built to house and is associated with the 85th Canadian Infantry Battalion. This battalion was a renowned Nova Scotia battalion, famous for its crucial role in the battle and victory at Vimy Ridge during the First World War.

It has a museum with totally unique exhibits. We want to preserve it, but DND has said they have other facilities nearby that can pick up the load.

Does anybody know of another case where a military facility like a drill hall was repurposed and kept alive and well, or do you have any ideas on how we can find a repurposed use for this building?

The Chair: Whoever wants to jump in, go ahead.

Mr. Mark Brandt: The first one that comes to mind is London, Ontario. They had an armoury that was purchased by corporate interests. They turned it into a hotel. They actually had a hotel tower growing out of the centre of the parade ground of the armoury.

In terms of ideas, Mr. Casey, is the building in town or is it out of town? Is it right in Amherst?

Mr. Bill Casey: It's right in the middle of Amherst.

Mr. Mark Brandt: I would hope that the good folks of Amherst would be looking for business opportunities, and would first of all go through the opportunities and the ideas. This has to be community-based, at least to start. You need to look at the condition it's in so that if somebody wants to become an investor in a new use for the building.... In other words, the museum could share the overall building with some other uses. If someone wanted to become an investor in that project, they'd want to know what they were getting into. You would need a good building condition report. To start, you would need to take it to the community.

Has that started to happen yet?

Mr. Bill Casey: It has, and the community is very interested. We've had one report on the condition of the building. We're seeking a second opinion. The community is very much involved. We have the private sector involved, but we do not have the answer yet. We want to maintain the building as it is, we want to maintain the museum where it is, because there are unique artifacts in this museum that were brought back by the soldiers from World War I and World War II, and they're one of a kind. It's very much part of our community, but we still have not found the answer for it. We haven't found a use for it yet.

The Chair: I'm going to have to chime in. I gave two more minutes on the time there because we're going to give two minutes to the Conservatives, and I'm going to add two minutes to Mr. Stetski's time, which is just coming up. Then I think we're going to be out of time. I gave you that little extra there, but I have to cut it off, I'm sorry.

Mr. Bill Casey: No problem.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you, Chair.

My question is going to be for Ms. Prince.

My riding of Kootenay—Columbia is largely rural. We have many small community museums that struggle every year for funding. Have you seen a model, whether it's from some other country or somewhere else, in terms of how countries take care of their heritage better, that we might be able to emulate here in Canada? I'm thinking particularly of a long-term funding model rather than year by year trying to figure out what to do.

Ms. Shannon Prince: Unfortunately, no. Here in our community, we do have a strong museum network. Even though there are quite a few diverse museums here, we still try to do things collectively. There's also a network of underground railroad sites where we also try to do things collectively, such as marketing, exhibits, and programming, where we can cross-promote each other or make an experience more memorable by suggesting doing A, B, and C. It is hard. I know at one point there was funding. I don't know if it was through the museums assistance program, but they provided funds for small community museum organizations collectively to do small workshops. I think those hands-on workshops are one of the things that small, rural communities are lacking, because to get some kind of subsidy to go to these places.... They're great, and a lot of us don't have that money in the budget to cover them. It's better when we can bring people in to teach 10 of us, as opposed to one going and then coming back to share that knowledge. Everybody can come and we bring someone in to teach us.

I'm looking. I'll let you know, though.

● (1035)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I have a question for Mr. Brandt.

I tell all my constituents from Kootenay—Columbia to come and see me this year or early next year before they close Centre Block for what is sometimes suggested to be 10 years of renovations. Of course, for Canadians who aren't aware, Centre Block is where the House of Commons, the Senate, and the Library of Parliament are located. I have to say when I think about renovations, and I walk down the halls in Centre Block, I look around hoping that they don't touch that or ruin that or change that. When you're renovating a historic building, and this is one of Canada's icons for sure, how do you try to balance off the preservation of those features with practicality and with modern business codes?

Mr. Mark Brandt: That's the sixty-four-million dollar question. Our firm is involved with the East Block rehabilitation, so I know exactly what you're talking about.

That's the centre of the debate. The first things that happen are comprehensive evaluations to ensure we understand what are the character-defining elements that give an historic place its historic and heritage value. Those are then in a sort of do-not-touch zone: preserve, enhance, do not destroy, and do not make unmitigated changes.

The whole process of rehabilitation is often a change management exercise. Things have to change because it has to be modernized for contemporary use or because there is a problem with integrity and it needs to be restored. Change has to happen, so it's a question of how to manage that change.

There are unbelievable levels of nuance in order to achieve that, but in the case of a place such as the Centre Block, you could be very sure that all of the character-defining elements, all of those aspects that you know and love and wouldn't want to see changed, will be highly respected. It would be quite surprising if new interventions were at a level that did fundamental change to the building.

The Sir John A. Macdonald Building is an example. We had to take the teller counters out of the old banking hall. My gosh, they were a character-defining element, but the new use called for a big ballroom, so there was no way we could keep the teller counters. In that case, they were sacrificed for the good of the overall project.

In a case like that of Centre Block.... Of course, it remains to be seen. They've just given the consultants their working papers to get going on it, but I would expect that it will be largely intact, and wholly intact when it comes to the character-defining elements.

The Chair: Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Prince, let me say that all the members of Parliament here are very receptive to your magical model. Let us know if you find it and we will be very pleased. Thank you in advance.

My question is for Mr. Brandt.

In your presentation, I believe you said that we could kill two birds with one stone. I am suggesting we make it three birds with one stone by adding the restoration of existing buildings. You talked about heritage preservation and reducing the impact of carbon. You should also mention future operating costs in your presentation. That is my advice. A building that is poorly insulated, poorly finished and poorly restored has major energy losses, I would say.

As I said initially, there are many buildings, infrastructures and needs in our communities in Canada. When a project is presented, is the environmental impact taken into consideration?

When you create an assessment grid for a project, is that impact measured?

The fact that a project involves not only the preservation of an important building, but also has a positive impact on the environment could be an important factor in your selection. It might tip the scales in favour of that project.

Is that approach taken?

● (1040)

[*English*]

The Chair: Really quickly, please, if possible.

Mr. Mark Brandt: If I understand your question correctly, you're asking if, when we go through the process of evaluating heritage properties, we are including the environmental elements in that evaluation.

Mr. Joël Godin: Yes.

Mr. Mark Brandt: That's a great question. The short answer is that up until today, the two have been in silos. Heritage conservation and environmental conservation have been in their silos. I think what you're finding right now is that we are at the vanguard of that changing. People are understanding that they are really part of or rooted in the same thing.

When we undertake a heritage rehabilitation project today, because we're improving that building we're looking to improve its environmental performance at the same time, but at the evaluation stage, they are still in separate silos today. I think that's changing.

The Chair: I'm going to have to end it there.

I want to express my gratitude to each of you for joining us today and for sharing your passion, your wisdom, and your suggestions. We have a shortish study, which means that we have one more week of witnesses. Then we're going to get into the report writing and then come back and work on recommendations.

If you have anything more to share with us that you have heard from the direction of questioning concerning which, as you're heading back to your regular lives, you think, “I wish I had said this”, or “I really want to emphasize that”, we would welcome that information. We'll work it into the report, if we get it early enough—by the end of next week. It would be wonderful if you have any last thoughts to share with us.

Thanks again. We'll end the meeting now.