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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 get started

Welcome to our guests. We'll do a proper official welcome in a minute, but I have some very quick technical things that I think we should get out of the way first.

I don't know where Mark is, but he should be coming soon. I want to welcome Geng Tan, Julie Dabrusin, and Robert Kitchen to the committee today and thank them for joining us.

I want to remind people that we have moved the meeting next Tuesday, because the commissioner is doing her reports relevant to the committee. I'll be leading that in the morning; hopefully, you can all join me. She has very good topic headings for the reports, which I think will be of great interest to us.

On that point, I think it's important that we have an opportunity to have the commissioner come in front of us. We didn't for her last reports, because we had a very aggressive schedule to try to get the report done before we broke for the summer. I want to make sure we have that chance.

Is there any disagreement to have the commissioner come before us as we're in that period of report writing? We're back in our ridings for a week, after next week, after our testimony is all heard. The analysts will be report writing. Then they will need a week for translation. I thought that the following week we would have the commissioner come. We will see what date she's available on one of those two days.

Do I have any disagreement that this is a good way to go forward for the committee? Do I need a motion, or can we just agree that she comes in that week? We'll work out with her what will work for her.

Okay? I think that would be great. So we've got that. That's good.

The meeting on Tuesday has been moved. We booked 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock, and we booked 3:30 to 5:30. I think the 11 to 1 slot wasn't going to work for some of you, but I think the 3:30 to 5:30 slot was available for everybody.

Just confirm that, please, and then we can make sure that we take the other booking off. You don't need to do it right now; I'll just reconfirm at the end of the meeting that we're good, and we'll pick that time that I'm looking for—I think 3:30 on October 3.

Did she give us a date...?

Oh, we may have a problem. But I'll talk to her and see what we can do.

I think that was the only technical detail I needed to make sure we got cleared before the weekend.

I'd like to formally introduce the guests with us today. We have Julian Smith, director of the Centre for Cultural Landscape at Willowbank; Chris Biebe, manager, heritage policy and government relations at the National Trust for Canada; and Karen Aird, president, and Madeleine Redfern, director, of Indigenous Heritage Circle.

Thanks to all of you for being here today.

We have Julian Smith's presentation already up here, so I thought we might start with that. If you're all right with that, we'll proceed.

I would just remind people that I use two cards. When you get to within a minute of your time, I'll hold up a yellow card—I just don't like to interrupt—and that way you'll get a sense of where you are with your time, because we don't have a clock behind us. When I hold up the red card, I don't mean for you to just stop what you're saying, but I do mean for you to wrap up your point because you've run out of time.

Thank you so much.

Please start.

● (0850)

Mr. Julian Smith (Director, Centre for Cultural Landscape, Willowbank, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to be here.

I'm going to start with some images. The reason I use images is that I sometimes have a hard time explaining how much the field of heritage conservation has changed in the time I've been involved with it, which is now about 50 years.

Here is a drawing of the 1950s. The modernist movement was in full swing. This is when I grew up. This is a modern building and a modern floor plan. But this also shows the hierarchies that existed between blue collar and white collar; between elementary school, high school, B.A., M.A., Ph.D.; the legal system, with yes-no answers to questions; and all kinds of hierarchies that existed. There were the ideas of the nuclear family, the suburb, the prohibition in the U.S. against racial intermarriage, concerns about gay and lesbian couples, and so on.

This next image illustrates the 1960s, when you began to get grassroots movements, both on the left.... I'm using the yellow for the environmental field. People began to protest the loss of wetlands, and the use of DDT. There was Rachel Carson on the heritage side. On the blue side there was Jane Jacobs and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. It was the beginning, again, of a grassroots cultural heritage protection movement. Both environmental heritage and cultural heritage were very grassroots. They didn't fit the system; there were outsiders. This was coming, as I say, from communities.

Next is the 1970s and 1980s. This brings the introduction of heritage legislation and environmental legislation in all the provinces. Those two fields, the environment field and the heritage field, became part of the system. With the laws in place, you began to have lawyers who specialized in environmental law and in heritage law. You began to have B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. programs in environment and in cultural heritage. There was the idea of joining the system and becoming part of these boxes, shown here.

The boxes really also represent the university and the academic system, which classifies knowledge into disciplines and categorizes books in libraries; and also the museum world, which is all about objects and classifying and putting them into systems.

Next comes development in the 1990s, the idea of cultural landscapes, which really was a concern to UNESCO with the World Heritage List. They didn't know how to deal with sites that were important, both from a natural heritage point of view and a cultural heritage point of view. Cultural landscape ideas were about the relationship of people and the natural environment and about human habitat and a more holistic way. They didn't fit the model very well. I think first nations communities began to be much more a part of the conversation about heritage generally, and for them, this nature-culture distinction had always been a problem.

The idea of cultural landscapes really pushed the boundaries and pushed us, as I show in this next image, to I would say the 21st century. I spend all day with 20- and 30-year-olds at Willowbank, where I teach and where I've been the executive director for the last 10 years. This image shows a program for young people interested in questions of human habitat.

I'm going to stop there. I'll leave that image up.

I have some observations. I would say that young people are interested in this kind of ecological and more holistic approach to human habitat. They want to get over the culture-nature distinction, which is so Eurocentric and which has been such a barrier to coming to terms with sustainability. They want planning, development, and design approaches that respect traditional knowledge and existing patterns, and within those, to figure out how you add contemporary layers and levels without simply erasing everything that's there and starting over again.

They want to shift from a utopian view of the world, which is always about monocultures, to a more organic way of development that is more about diversity. They want to knit back together working with hands and working with the mind and overcoming this distinction between design and build, between blue collar and white collar, between intellectual activity...and also between apprenticeship and academic ways of learning. Not only are these people interested in this, but they're demanding it, because they see an urgency to coming to terms with questions of sustainability.

In terms of my observations or offerings to the committee, I would say a couple of things. I want to make reference to Bill C-323, which, in the slides, is back here. This is really a chance for Canada to catch up to where most other countries moved in the nineties, of saying, “We recognize built heritage as being fundamental.”

● (0855)

I would make two observations about it. One is that I would hope the emphasis, if there are tax credits, is on income-producing properties. Among the concerns that have been raised about somebody owning a beautiful historic home in Westmount or Rockcliffe or Shaughnessy or whatever is whether they should be getting a tax credit for work on that house. The idea that the U.S. adopted, that it should be for income-producing properties, has put the focus on tax credits for the rehabilitation of commercial buildings, of main streets in little towns, of urban neighbourhoods, abandoned industrial places. What the statistics show pretty clearly... and we recently completed a study for the UN Habitat Conference in Quito on the North American situation in terms of culture, heritage, and sustainability. Older districts with these older buildings have a richer texture to them. They provide 30% to 40% more employment per square metre of building, they have more minority owners, they have more women owners, they have more young people, they have more age diversity, they are more walkable neighbourhoods, and they have more public transit. These are areas that we need to understand and deal with, and there needs to be encouragement for doing so. It's in income-producing properties that you get the real swings in urban areas that are either going to allow places to continue to exist or not.

The other point I would make is that if you look at the American situation, since they've had so many years—and I'm sure you've heard the statistics about tax credits—you see that those tax credits generate so much other tax revenue. There are very few tax credit programs that have been so productive—seven to ten times the amount of private investment.

There are related things. Federal accommodation should happen in existing buildings, unless there aren't existing buildings available. Federal programs that support seniors housing and low-income housing should prefer existing buildings unless there are none available. This is something the U.S. has been doing for 40 years.

When I practised, very early in my career I was down in the U.S., in Massachusetts. If you wanted to do low-income housing, you had to look for old schools or old abandoned industrial buildings, because they tended to be in downtown areas with good public transit. When I came to Ontario, land value was a key component. In the first project we did, the developer moved the project at the last minute to a farmer's field, because it was cheap land and allowed them to meet the budget. These were low-income people out in the middle of nowhere without transportation.

With these other programs, the national building code needs to be adapted for existing buildings. There are many government initiatives. The environmental assessment process could knit together the culture and nature part of it, and it should be called a sustainability assessment. Unfortunately, when people think of the environment, they think of the natural environment and not the cultural part of it.

At the more general level, if we go to this other image, which is not just about historic buildings, I think we need to engage Canadians, particularly young Canadians, on the question of more sustainable human habitats.

This shows a start. ICOMOS advises UNESCO on cultural heritage, and IUCN on natural heritage. Parks Canada needs to engage in that nature-culture dialogue in a really important way, because Canada is looked at as being a potential leader in the world in this field, and yet we have national historic sites and we have national parks that tend to be two solitudes, as is the case in much of society.

That engagement has to be shared with the non-profit sector. The non-profit sector, when I was growing up, was almost irrelevant—sort of cookie sales, and hat held out to get donations. The non-profit sector has grown remarkably. I've worked part time in the academic sector, the public sector, and the private sector, and in my view the non-profit sector has become a much more important actor in this whole thing.

I think there should be consideration of an agency of the federal government that deals with urban and rural development, partly so that the federal government can connect to municipalities, to townships, to villages, to reserves, to places in which the innovation is happening. This has to be gathered on a national scale in order for Canada to contribute to the dialogue that's happening around the world, which is really a critical dialogue about sustainability. We have to integrate some of the programs with Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada so that we deal holistically with the heritage field and with the confluences that these pieces have together.

● (0900)

I'll stop there. I think it's an amazing time. I think we're in a period of transition. If you look at government departments, agencies, and programs, I think they reflect this image. I think we need to move to this one.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's great.

Chris, would you like to go next?

Mr. Chris Wiebe (Manager, Heritage Policy and Government Relations, National Trust for Canada, As an Individual): Sure.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, and thank you for your interest in historic places. The heritage field is diverse, with different ownership circumstances, and the threats and potential solutions are various. I can see that you are grappling with the question of where the federal government can make the greatest difference.

This morning I want to hone in on two areas that haven't really been explored as much in these hearings. Those are commercial heritage properties and properties owned by charities and non-profits. To assist, I have provided a handout detailing some of the existing incentives, and I'll refer to that throughout my presentation.

There are 440,000 pre-1960 commercial buildings in Canada. If we assume that about 5% to 15% of these could potentially be of heritage interest, there would be 22,000 to 66,000 buildings in this class across Canada. This is a substantial group of community-defining buildings on Canada's main streets.

But why do they need incentives in the first place? What are the disincentives that hamper their survival? First let me run through a few of them. Return on investment: heritage rehabilitation is often considered risky because there are unknowns, unlike for construction on bare ground. Construction costs: while some heritage rehabilitation projects cost less, others cost more, and then these ambiguities serve to suppress demand. Then there's financing. The big banks for the most part do not want to be involved in “staged” investments and are not prepared for the risks that come with adapting older buildings. There's some discussion around rural areas, in that they will not invest in older buildings in smaller communities at all. The fourth reason is lack of ease of property development. Investors are often discouraged by real or perceived restrictions on altering heritage properties. Fifth, there is the current federal tax system itself, which presents problems, including the inability to get a clear explanation from tax officials about which types of rehabilitation work are immediately expensable in a given tax year and which must be capitalized. There are also new-construction biases within the GST rules themselves.

So are there good examples of places where incentives have tipped the balance away from these disincentives? As Julian and others have mentioned, in the United States there has been a booming and competitive industry over the past 40 years because of the establishment of federal tax credits there for the rehabilitation of heritage buildings at a 20% level. This program stimulates private investment in abandoned and underperforming properties. Over the years, $24 billion in credits have generated more than $28 billion in federal tax revenue, and leveraged $131 billion in private investment, an impressive number. This is a 5:1 ratio of private investment to tax credits, and it has created 2.5 million jobs and preserved 42,000 historic properties.

It's important to note that there has been tremendous rural impact from this program over the past 15 years. Over 40% of U.S. tax credit projects are located in communities with populations of less than 25,000.

If you refer to the chart I provided, the one with the five circles on it, you can see that the larger projects typically have a limited ratio of incentives available as a result of caps on programs. I've chosen the $2.2 million level for a commercial project because that was the average cost of the CHPIF, commercial heritage properties incentive fund, projects back in the mid-2000s.

By comparison, have a look at the pie on the right; with all three levels of government in the United States contributing, the picture is very different. Federal tax credits of 20% can be stacked with state credits for a combined 40% to 45%. You should note that 34 states out of the 50 have these stackable credits.

My consultation across the country has shown that it is on these larger projects, those of two and a half million dollars and things of that nature, that a tax credit is needed. For example, the Farnam Block on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon was demolished in 2015. Repair costs were estimated at $700,000. The city was able to bring forward only $150,000, and the building came down. Or take something like the Calgary Brewing and Malting site, which is sort of like the Distillery District in Toronto in the making. It's languishing for lack of a substantial incentive to give it some velocity.

What can the federal government do? Essentially there are only two mechanisms for the federal government to intervene in the commercial property market, and those are income tax measures or grants and contributions. You've heard about the CHPIF fund and its success as a pilot program for a tax credit program. Analysis by Deloitte and Ernst & Young concluded that refundable tax credits would be more effective than would a grant program. A refundable tax credit offers a number of advantages to the private sector that a contribution program does not. It offers predictability and timeliness. Contribution programs often require more than double the time for approvals on the front end. It leverages existing familiarity with the tax system, creating investor confidence. It also offers flexibility: it works well for large or small projects.

● (0905)

Understandably, the potential cost of implementing a tax credit has been raised at this committee. Deloitte's analysis of the estimated cost of a historic rehabilitation tax credit in Canada found that, far from being a cost to government, these tax credits for commercial properties would create net revenue growth from corporate income tax, GST, and additional personal income tax stemming from new employment.

When we model for a universe of 22,000 commercial properties, we see that these tax credits cost $3.8 million in year two and $55 million in year five. However, these credits generate net revenue growth of $3.4 million in year two, rising to $14 million by year five. The modelling for a universe of 66,000 commercial properties follows a similar trajectory. For broader impact, the government could consider extending a rehabilitation tax credit to heritage homeowners, like that introduced by Bill C-323.

Let's shift quickly to not-for-profit and residential buildings. Tens of thousands of heritage buildings in Canada would not benefit from a tax-based measure because they are not used for revenue-producing purposes. Such heritage buildings include places of worship, historic house museums, and former residential schools.

If you look at the other side of my handout, with the three circles on it, you'll see a sample of incentives from a number of cities. Let me remind you that each of these shows the best-case scenario for grants or tax breaks, but these are often limited by annual budgets for granting programs, such as in Nanaimo, where there is a limited amount every year, and in Halifax, where there is the same situation. We wanted to be fair, so we wanted to have the best possible scenario there.

At current levels, these incentives are not game-changing or behaviour-changing. We are hearing that they are helping already-willing owners but not pushing others. You will notice that the federal government is missing from this incentives picture, and there is no dedicated fund for places outside of the national cost-sharing program for historic places, as these are only for national historic sites, including heritage railway stations and lighthouses.

Competition for mainstream federal funding is fierce. For example, the Canada 150 community infrastructure program requires not-for-profits with modest heritage projects to compete with those with projects for arenas, pools, and sports fields. Earlier this year, FedDev's website reported 1,100 applications, requesting more than $260 million in funding, for their first intake—almost six times more than the available funding. It's a difficult environment for heritage places to get heard in.

Here are the two things the federal government can do to ameliorate the situation for non-profit buildings. The first is to create a source of federal matching funds to leverage investment by other governments. Corporations and individuals could actually help encourage this kind of philanthropy. Funding could be distributed using modern approaches like crowdfunding, which is currently being used successfully by places like National Trust for Canada under the banner of This Place Matters. Over the past three years, the trust's investment of $300,000 has leveraged over $1.1 million in donations for heritage sites. Similarly, Save America's Treasures was a decade-long program in the United States that invested $318 million in federal funds to leverage $400 million from private sources, resulting in the preservation of 1,200 important historic structures and 16,000 jobs. There are also Canadian precedents for using federal matching funds in this way, including the Department of Canadian Heritage's existing matching donations program, which is restricted to endowment matching and for which only arts organizations are eligible, or the government's response to Syrian refugees or disasters and crises.

The second thing the government could do is to provide steady increased funding for the national cost-sharing program for heritage places. I think this has been mentioned on other occasions. The available funding has ranged from zero dollars for some years to as little as $1 million for other years. The current $10 million per year for this year and next year is an important piece of the puzzle, but there are more than 700 properties eligible, and many have been underfunded for decades, so $10 million per year is really a drop in the bucket. The program is already heavily oversubscribed, as Parks Canada mentioned the other day. By contrast, the Canada cultural spaces fund recently received $84 million a year for two years, so there's an order of magnitude there.

● (0910)

In summary, we would recommend the following. First, we would recommend implementation of a federal heritage rehabilitation tax incentive, such as the measures recently proposed in Bill C-323. That is a proven way to attract private and corporate investment to privately owned historic places and to give them vibrant new uses. Two, the government could consider extending a rehabilitation tax credit to heritage homeowners to get more impact. Three, federal investment in seed funding for creative financing mechanisms like crowdfunding could help many more charities and not-for-profits attract private donations and would save and renew some of the thousands of other heritage buildings that make up the fabric of our communities. Finally, an increase in federal cost-shared funding available for the national historic sites heritage places program would help turn the tide of neglect for these important national icons as well.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Sorry to rush you along there. You had lots to share.

Welcome, Karen Aird and Madeleine. I don't know who wants to go first.

Ms. Karen Aird (President, Indigenous Heritage Circle): I'll go first. I'll talk briefly, and then Madeleine will. Thanks.

My name is Karen Aird. I just want to say *tansi*. Thank you for inviting us to be here today.

I'm here on behalf of the Indigenous Heritage Circle, which is an organization that Madeleine and I work with. It's a non-profit national organization. It's the only indigenous-led and -designed organization for heritage in Canada. We started it in 2013, and we incorporated in 2016. It's been on a volunteer basis. We've been working nationally to try to create recognition and inclusion for indigenous heritage at the national level. We've had round tables in Ottawa and in Vancouver, and we're really trying to create a space, an opportunity, for indigenous people to actually have their issues, their concerns, and recognition of their heritage included provincially and nationally. When I talk about indigenous heritage, I'm talking quite globally, because for every indigenous group it means many, many different things.

I know for my people—I'm from Saulteau First Nations—Mamahtawin represents a place that we sit that's sacred, and that's how we define indigenous heritage. But for many indigenous groups, it can mean intangible things like laws, stories, and oral histories. It can mean places that may have no physical objects but that are sacred, where people go for ceremonies. It can be artifacts that many of you see in museums. It can be even things like intellectual properties that are passed: our stories, our songs, our totem poles. Those are all just some of the many things that represent indigenous heritage.

Madeleine and I have been working nationally trying to get a voice and recognition for indigenous heritage, because often it's brought forward only during resource development. Often when they have to do environmental assessments, they will see the need to do what we call traditional use studies. Those traditional use studies do not address most of our concerns, and neither do they deal with protection or long-term preservation of our heritage.

We feel that in this time, this time of reconciliation, this time when we see a new change in government, there's a need for people to start thinking differently about heritage, and moving it beyond built heritage, and thinking about how indigenous people perceive it and how we want to protect it. We do have our own mechanisms. We do have our own methods and approaches to protecting and interpreting heritage, and we feel it's really time now for indigenous people to have a voice in this.

I'm going to leave it to Madeleine to talk some more about our work.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern (Director, Indigenous Heritage Circle): Thank you.

I was listening keenly to what Julian and Chris had to say. I absolutely do appreciate and respect their views, but the more I listened, it spoke to me about how indigenous heritage is simply not part of most of the conversations. It is very focused, as Karen said, on the built environment. I'm listening to the proposals for tax credits and the value of having systems that protect heritage sites, and while I understand and appreciate that it is important, it does not include our indigenous realities. It is not set up; we're almost having two different conversations, or a conversation that I can almost tell you, even if my Inuit national president was here, or the other indigenous leaders at the local, regional, or national level, they would be saying, this is not actually the conversation that we want to be having with respect to how we proceed in even having acknowledgement of what, as Karen explained, is heritage for us.

The systems that are in place are not set up for our communities to actually access. We do not meet the criteria. The tax credit system is beyond what we are able to access in being able to not only have our heritage sites recognized but protected in the way we want. As Karen indicated, it's often brought up in a developmental context, and even then it focuses usually only on archaeology. If there are some sort of traditional burial grounds or some sacred sites, they're to be preserved. But outside of that, everything that we know we need....

Julian was showing the slide of the 1950s. We're not on that slide; we're not in those boxes. It predates the 1950s. There's a mindset, and it's challenging to begin to expand: how do we have ourselves included? Not even in an existing system that we find ourselves that we don't fit in; how do we create a parallel system or integrate those systems that allow indigenous communities across this wonderful nation to be able to have the resources, outside of a development project, to actually begin to have national funds that allow us to begin to have our sites or our practices designated, recognized, and financially supported?

Those were the main sentiments I wanted to express after listening to Chris and Julian.

Is there anything you want to add, Karen?

● (0915)

Ms. Karen Aird: Yes.

We've been working on this since 2013, and we've been doing it all through volunteering. We've had to get funding wherever we can through different supports for these round tables. It's incredibly informative. When we met in Ottawa and in Vancouver, and we had indigenous groups come, they showed up. People really wanted to have the space to talk about this, and they wanted an opportunity to see change. There is a real need for an organization, whether it's the IHC or another. We've been working on this for a long time, but I'm saying there's a need for a voice and a place for people to have a voice.

At these round tables, it was clear that there was a strong disconnect between our first nations communities and accessing funding or accessing support, just even knowing who to contact. There's a big gap in these relationships and I don't see it changing any time soon. People need to start really thinking outside the box about how we're going to approach this differently. I think it has to be through an indigenous-led and indigenous-designed organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

All of you have brought different aspects to the table for us to consider, and I know we're going to get into the questioning. We are open, and we're very honoured to have you here. We are listening, and we want to hear your advice on how we can help make it better.

We'll start with Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Thank you to each of the witnesses who spoke this morning. We have a very diverse panel, and the perspectives that each of you have brought are really useful as we try to sort out how to move forward on this heritage question and how the federal government engages in heritage conservation.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Aird and Ms. Redfern. I think we have this huge opportunity and this huge challenge related to indigenous heritage. As you say, the existing structures are very colonial and do not reflect indigenous heritage and values. The written brief you gave us was really useful. I've read it a couple of times, and it raises a lot of the issues.

I'd like to start with some of the solutions as to how to move forward, and you've touched on some of them. One of your solutions is to have an indigenous-led organization. We can always put money into resourcing organizations, but then what does that actually lead to? Do you have a sense of what success would look like if we were able to have an indigenous-led organization? What happens after that?

The heritage field was very much my career prior to politics. There are some examples that have led to protection of heritage; our cultural landscapes are examples. In the south, in developed areas, that becomes a bit more challenging. What does success look like to you?

● (0920)

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: We have, absolutely, initially tried to work with Heritage Trust, Canadian Heritage, and Parks Canada. To give them credit, they recognized the value. I think everyone was incredibly surprised that no national indigenous heritage organization exists. That's one thing. When we went to our respective national indigenous organizations, they were very supportive, but this doesn't fit within their mandate. When we researched the history and the creation of the National Trust, it was interesting, because a huge endowment was provided. I recognize the value of their work, but if you actually look at it, very little indigenous work has been done through that vehicle.

When I look at what our organization could do with regard to the outcomes, in the absence of a national indigenous heritage body, it's very difficult for the federal government departments—not just Canadian Heritage and Parks Canada but other departments, truth be told—with regard to anything that has to do with development. Who do they go to? How do they help? Who do they connect with, and how do they ensure that the right conversations are being had? How do we develop that system?

Where we see the value of this organization is in helping to facilitate those conversations internally within our peoples and communities across the land. We cannot do that from the top down. A lot of capacity development has to occur even within our communities. Equally, we've seen the immense value and need to also educate the local, provincial, territorial, and national governments. How do we achieve reconciliation? With culture and heritage, as Julian said, you have to look at it more holistically. It's not something you can box into simply one department or even one sector. There are so many interconnections in this area. We saw ourselves as a coordinating, facilitating, and educating body. We are not the be-all and end-all, but we're there to support.

Is there anything you want to add, Karen?

Ms. Karen Aird: When we're talking about what we see ourselves as, this is through two round tables. We had hoped to do round tables across Canada but we sort of stepped back because we all have working lives and this has been a volunteer effort. The two round tables really informed us and told us that there was a need for almost a clearing house, where people could come to access information, to learn about grants and about who to talk to, from both the indigenous side and the government side.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have less than a minute.

Mr. John Aldag: Chris, did you have experience with the commercial heritage properties incentive fund? It was a pilot in the early 2000s, as you mentioned, and it was discontinued. I've been trying to dig around and find out why that was. I don't know if you have any thoughts. Was that a program that provided some useful lessons, or were there shortcomings that you are able to speak to? Any thoughts on the old CHPIF program would be appreciated.

● (0925)

Mr. Chris Wiebe: Actually, I'm not sure why it was concluded, but it was successful. I think there were 49 projects involved, and as I think Julian mentioned, they had leveraged eight times more in private investment, of $177 million. It was trying to test the appetite and the impact that a federal incentive could have. There were a lot of lessons learned there in terms of its ability to attract municipal and provincial money, and obviously private investment as well. It was a successful model, and it was supposed to make the leap into a tax credit after it had been analyzed by Deloitte and others, but that phase hasn't happened.

I'm hearing Madeleine and Karen, and I appreciate their thoughts. I think it's not an either-or situation. I don't think it's a zero-sum game where there is a focus on some things and not on others. As a country, we need to be expanding our vision on a number of different fronts, whether it's built environment, whether it's indigenous landscapes, or whether it's cultural landscapes. I think it's an opportunity to recognize the fact that there are different problems, and different solutions and tools for the tool kit will be needed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you.

I have a question for you, Mr. Wiebe. You were present when Mr. Berg-Dick gave testimony to the committee. He seemed to suggest that any tax incentive program at the federal level would necessarily mean a decline in revenues. So whether it's a grant program or a tax incentive-based program, there was still a similar effect either way. It was less government revenue for either programming.

You would not agree with that assessment, I assume.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I can see where he and some of his analysis may be coming from. You could say that if you didn't incentivize certain kinds of work, this work would be happening otherwise, but the fact that it is revenue-neutral and that you're promoting a social and cultural good shows a place for the federal government to be involved in that.

In terms of the tax credit and its ability to leverage money, some of the analysis done by Deloitte immediately after the CHPIF program demonstrated that it wouldn't be a millstone around the public purse, that it would actually be generating new activity, maybe redirecting it through...from projects that may be more cookie-cutter, non-new construction projects. That's the new, more holistic vision for the management of our built environment that I think Julian is talking about as well.

Hon. Ed Fast: That's very helpful.

Mr. Smith, you suggested that the government focus on revenue-producing heritage properties. Is that right?

Mr. Wiebe, would you concur with that assessment that there should be a special emphasis on providing incentives for revenue-producing heritage properties?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: We conducted a study and talked a few years back with 27 property owners and developers across the country and got a really clear picture that what's missing is something that can leverage the existing incentives that are there at the provincial and municipal levels to strong effect. I'm thinking about places like Winnipeg with the Bay building and something of that order of magnitude, a huge iconic building right on Memorial Boulevard looking down toward the legislature. You're not going to get anywhere with a $50,000 grant from the city for that. You're not going to change any minds or change any decision-makers. There needs to be something up front that's dependable and predictable, so that people can say, “Okay, I know we can depend on a certain amount of funds to make this project around an iconic heritage building happen,” and it has to be on a scale that can have an impact.

If you look at examples like that across the country, there are many that could have that big advantage.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Smith, you heard Mr. Wiebe talk about stackable credits. You heard him talk about refundable tax credits. I assume you would support those kinds of incentives, at least for some of the built heritage we have across the country.

Mr. Julian Smith: Yes, absolutely. Municipalities are important to understand, because that's where innovation happens in almost every area, and particularly in terms of human habitat. I mean, cities are on the front line. They are dealing with Canadians every day on a one-to-one basis, so I think the idea of municipal property tax rebates but also support grants....

I mean, they are trying everything, and I think we have to get the pulse of that. Municipal planners hardly ever get together across the country. They don't have any vehicle for that, and I think that's why the federal government has a role in collecting that collective wisdom.

I want to return to what Karen and Madeleine were talking about. I think the tax credit issue is critical. The heritage field in general is moving to a different place, where, I would say, it's not a question of whether indigenous cultural heritage has a place in the system. I think in some ways a group like the Indigenous Heritage Circle has to design the new system and then look at how things like tax credits fit into that.

That's what has happened at UNESCO, where there are three types of cultural landscapes: designed, which are like Versailles; evolved, which are agricultural areas in France and so on; and the third category of associative, which had almost no definition, which was for those first nations people who had this odd view of nature being significant. What has happened is that the associative cultural landscape category is actually the most fascinating, and I think it will eventually take over the other two. Versailles is really an associative cultural landscape. That's the critical thing.

Young people at Willowbank are realizing that they are looking to some of the indigenous understanding of cultural heritage as the base framework for how to look at the world. It's not simply incorporating those ideas into existing systems but changing the systems.

● (0930)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Wiebe, I'll go back to you. Can you drill down a little more into the stackable tax credits that you were referencing in your comments?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: They are available in 34 states in the U.S. They have found that the U.S. federal tax credit is not quite enough. For the same rehabilitation work, you can put them together and get 20% off and a 20% to 25% tax credit, on top of the 20% available federally for that rehabilitation work. That would give you at least a 40% or 45% income tax credit on that kind of work, which is extraordinarily compelling.

On our sheet here, you see the example we were modelling. It actually comes from Dallas in Texas. It makes up a very large portion of the cost of rehabilitation, and it makes it practical to go ahead.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You have run out of time. Sorry about that.

Mr. Stetski is next.

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

Thank you for being here today.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Aird and Ms. Redfern. The committee did a study on parks and protected areas last spring. We went out and met with witnesses in some of the national parks, including Jasper. One of the chiefs who came and spoke with us used some words that have stayed with me ever since. He said, “We do not have a written language, so the Creator wrote our story on the land.” They proceeded to show us photographs of one site in particular, which is on private property. I, and I think many of my colleagues, wondered how that could not be protected.

I will back up about 10 years. I was manager with provincial parks in southeastern B.C., and we hired a Ktunaxa woman to do cultural studies on values inside parks. Of course, they were reluctant to share the results of that study, which I absolutely understood.

How do we build a better future for protecting indigenous sites? There seems to be a fair bit of mistrust to get past, to start with, in terms of sharing values. What are the most important steps the federal government can take to start better protecting indigenous sites?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I think the message, loud and clear, from the round table that Indigenous Heritage Circle facilitated was about the value and need to have an institution that is indigenous-led, where that trust can be built internally, which then allows our peoples and our communities across the country to figure out how to have those difficult conversations. How do we share our heritage with Parks Canada? How do we influence Parks Canada's approach and policy in such a way that we can begin to have our heritage included in those spaces?

We actually had a conversation with Parks Canada about how there are some difficult histories around even the creation of those parks. In most cases, even from my research and work with the Qikiqtani Truth Commission, we know that where we had sacred sites or places we were using or that had special value because of them being caribou calving grounds, all of a sudden based on that information—from area administrators, or RCMP officers, interestingly enough, and many times in the north, or anthropologists, or scientists—those became sites protected on a Canadian national level, and we were then actually prevented from accessing or using these sacred sites that were the basis of, in some cases, the creation of those parks.

That shows the need for and the value in having such an organization that can actually have, as I said earlier, the difficult internal conversations that then allow us to figure out how we even have those conversations with institutions like Parks Canada, Heritage Canada, or National Trust for Canada, because we also have to figure that out for ourselves.

I do want to add one thing if you don't mind, Chair. Protecting even the Hudson's Bay Company building in Winnipeg is incredibly important to indigenous people not just from a national standpoint or from Winnipeg's standpoint but because the history of that particular company involves almost every indigenous community across the country. We also have HBC buildings in our own rural and remote communities, but we want to see our history included in those stories, not just the perspective of the company or possibly, in some cases, their views of what their historical relationship was with us. Our views need to be included in that building story.

Is there anything you want to add, Karen?

● (0935)

Ms. Karen Aird: No.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I get passionate about this.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That is great. We need to find a way forward to build a better future for protecting and celebrating indigenous sites across the country. We need to get there at some point, and hopefully sooner rather than later.

I have a question for you, Mr. Smith. In the city of Cranbrook, which is part of my riding of Kootenay—Columbia where I live, there was a 1929 municipal fire hall that was vacant, a beautiful old building. When I was mayor, we were considering moving it over to the arts council to become a permanent home for the arts. We had a change in administration, and the new administration decided to put it on the market, and sold it. It's now going to be the Fire Hall Kitchen and Tap, a brewery.

In your view, in terms of a hierarchy of who you'd like to see take over heritage buildings, is there a preference? Should it be federal government or governments first, non-profit societies second, and private sector third? Or does it matter?

Mr. Julian Smith: I don't think it matters. There in fact are eating establishments that are run by non-profit organizations in order to employ disadvantaged youth. Hamilton has some great examples of that. All I would say is that the non-profit sector has to be calculated in a way that we don't know how to calculate it. There's not just the private sector and the public sector; we also have this non-profit sector that can often play a critical role in carrying out some of the government's objectives because it's not working under a for-profit motive.

The one other comment I want to make to you, since you're from British Columbia, is that in my experience, the west coast of Canada is about a generation ahead of the east coast and central Canadian cities, townships, and rural areas in doing this kind of connection. I think that's because environmental awareness has been stronger because first nations communities have been a greater part of the conversation for a little longer. I think the rest of Canada has a lot to learn from what's going on not only in British Columbia. I think Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are further ahead. I get frustrated when people look at some of the big central Canadian cities as maybe the places where we're going to learn about the future, because I don't think that's where it's coming from.

The Chair: Thank you so much. And I'm sorry to have to cut that off, because it's great advice.

Darren Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much for being here.

Ms. Aird and Ms. Redfern, thank you so much for bringing your voices. Madeleine, you said we're having two different conversations, and I was thinking the exact same thing when you said that. Thank you for being the voice of your community.

Mr. Aldag said something that really struck home and that I've said before about the environment as a whole. He said this is a big challenge, but it's also a huge opportunity. So thank you for your testimony. I don't have any direct questions for you, but you opened my eyes with some of your comments, specifically when you said that the system is not set up for your communities and you're not part of the focus. Those are important comments, and I thank you.

Chris, you said that heritage rehab is “risky”. Certainly it's expensive, but I'm interested in your thoughts a little more on how it's risky. I'm interested in new build versus refurbishing heritage. The cost of a new building has probably doubled in the last 10 to 12 years, as compared with buying an existing home. Not that we're talking about homes, but please share your thoughts on new build as compared with refurbish, and whether that has balanced the scales a bit with the huge costs or there are corresponding huge increases to costs with refurbishing heritage.

I'm also interested in your thoughts on what I would call “façadism”. I'm not certain that's an actual term, but when we talk about heritage buildings, very many of the facades are being saved and the inside of the building is being gutted. One counsellor in Halifax called it the “Disneyfication” of heritage. I'm interested in your thoughts. My personal thought on that is it's not the best-case scenario, but it's much better than the worst-case scenario. I'm interested in your thoughts on those few topics there.

Also, I think it might have been you, Chris, who mentioned helping willing owners. The tax breaks or grants help willing owners, but they don't really push anybody to do anything they don't want to. I guess I'm trying to come full circle here and wondering if the changes in the economy as related to new build versus refurbish have maybe levelled that scale.

● (0940)

The Chair: There are a lot of questions there and we have three and a half minutes. I just want to give that perspective on it—

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. I have questions for other people, too.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Well, you can add them over, but....

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I'll try to do one minute, or maybe 30 seconds, per question.

We haven't seen a huge recalibration of the costs. The risk of heritage rehab is that in the mainstream construction industry, there isn't quite the same knowledge of how these old building systems worked. When they go into them, they're discovering that when they start pulling apart walls, they discover new things.

When you're building something from the bare ground up, you knock it down and you can create a very straightforward pro forma. You know exactly how much the steel beams cost and how much it's going to cost to put the panels on the outside, whereas with an older building, unless you're very knowledgeable, it can be a challenge.

Some of the differentials happen when there are aggressive new kinds of adaptive reuse being put into buildings. When you're taking a commercial building with big open floor plates and those services, and trying to make it into a residential building, then you have to put new things in and it becomes more complicated. If there's more of a gentle adaptation, then the costs are less. I'll have to look into that further, but from what we've seen, the costs haven't changed that much.

Facadism is an interesting point, because oftentimes the heritage designations we place on buildings are on the public value amenity, which is the facade that all the public can see. Why would I provide a grant or why would I designate the interior when that's the private space of the owner? I mean, I think it's kind cynical, in a way, to become fixated completely on the facade. Is it the best-case scenario? It's a waste of environmental materials to throw away the rest of the building, so there's a large conversation happening in the heritage conservation community about that one.

On helping willing owners, coming back to what Madeleine and Karen were saying, there's a whole conversation that needs to be happening around how we handle what we have, and making more with less, doing more with less things. I think there's the idea of adaptation, about adaptable places and looking at buildings that are adaptable and can change over time; about durability, about durable materials, because I think we build buildings that are somewhat disposable and get rid of them every few decades; about older buildings and their natural materials, so that there are no toxic elements in there that we're going to be leaving as a legacy to our grandchildren; and the idea of maintainability, about places that have the ability to be maintained over time.

I think it's part of a larger conversation about building a more sustainable world that isn't about creating things with solar panels on them, but just using things that we already have in a more informed and more holistic way.

Sorry, I was trying to rush through things there.

● (0945)

The Chair: Wow, you answered all that, and you still have a minute. If you have anything more to share on it.... You really jammed that all in.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I'll just go to Mr. Smith, if I could.

You said that the national building code needs to be updated, but you didn't really specify what your thoughts were. Do you want to take 40 seconds or so to elaborate on how you think the national building code should be updated?

Mr. Julian Smith: I was chief architect at Parks Canada 35 years ago. At that time, the associate committee on the national building code said they were doing a study to adapt the national building code for existing buildings, because it's really focused on new construction.

Thirty-five years later, it still has to appear. It just needs to be a committee.... The associate committee on the national building code has lots of power to bring good people together.

Mr. Darren Fisher: It's an interesting comment, because this committee is quite interested in the—

Mr. Julian Smith: I would say that the expertise in education, architectural education planners and so on, is all focused on new construction, as is the national building code. At Willowbank, we run a program where we teach architects, planners, stonemasons, and carpenters with the same curriculum, because we want them to be comfortable with existing buildings, and we teach contemporary design. I would say that the cost overruns and the uncertainty with older buildings and older places are due to a lack of expertise in the professionals who get involved with them. The building code doesn't help.

The Chair: We keep coming back to the building code. I like that.

Up next is Mr. Sopuck.

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

Ms. Redfern and Ms. Aird, I very much appreciated your testimony.

I'd like to point out to you, Ms. Redfern, that I spent some time with someone you know, Natan Obed. I was part of the C3 expedition from Nain to Iqaluit. I spent a lot of time with Natan and had some intense discussions with him on matters that you and I take a great deal of interest in. We stopped in at the Hebron site and saw the restoration there. I was very struck. Even though that was a site of pain, I think, for the Inuit people, I found the desire to recreate and preserve the site remarkable. God bless them for what they are doing. They are making some major headway there.

In that vein, there doesn't seem to be any reticence in the Inuit community. You talked about Hudson's Bay Company, for it to acknowledge the so-called cultural merging between Europeans and the Inuit, kind of based on the fur trade. That was very important.

Could you quickly elaborate on that for me?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: If I understand your question and comment correctly, I think the Inuit are very pragmatic. Even the work I did with the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.... This is a shared history. This is a shared reality. We need to have our histories told. It's kind of sad, I think; most of our communities, in Iqaluit or across the north, have these HBC buildings. They are not designated, and they are literally falling apart. But they are almost the first sites tourists want to come to. Ideally, these buildings could and should be refurbished. The challenge, even for us in our northern communities is that, except for Iqaluit and Nunavut, they are non tax-based. The reserves are non tax-based. A tax-based system.... It makes it even difficult. How do we move forward in trying to have access to a program that works that way, to actually begin to do those restorations or celebration sites? In the case in Newfoundland and Labrador, the provincial and federal government come in and assist.

I don't know if I actually touched on your question.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: You certainly did.

I am also very interested in the relationship between wildlife tourism and the preservation of a culture. I think I got from both of your testimonies that cultural preservation is definitely a big part of heritage preservation. I am interested, for example, in how the polar bear hunt in Nunavut goes on. I will defend that hunt as long as I possibly can. It's well done. I have spoken very loudly in defence of that particular activity.

What's interesting about that hunt, as you well know, Ms. Redfern, is that it's done in a very traditional manner. I am going to quote from a document:

> Positive cultural outcomes for communities that offer these hunts include the revival of dog mushing; preservation of traditional sewing, hunting and survival skills, and accommodation within the industry for the subsistence economy and Inuit norms of sharing.

Here, I think, is a remarkable melding of two cultures that, with no subsidies whatsoever, is very quietly preserving and protecting a culture.

How important is the polar bear hunt to the communities that do it in this particular manner?

● (0950)

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: It is tremendously important, as you've indicated. What I find many people don't realize is that the sports hunt, when southerners come up, actually helps, as you indicated, preserve the traditional practices. When we do a non-sports hunt, we can hunt however we wish. We can hunt by snowmobile or even by boat in the summer. But the tourism and the sports hunt aspect, because of the requirement to use dog teams in those communities that decide...because we get to decide at the community level. On a community-by-community basis we get to decide what portion of the quota, which is determined on science and sustainability requirements, of those polar bears are put into a sports hunt process.

You're absolutely right; it not only revitalizes the sewing skills.... Believe me, there's nothing warmer than a caribou *qulitta*—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I've got one.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: —which is a caribou skin, or polar bear pants. Believe me, you would take that over a snow goose down jacket any day.

What I also need to stress to people is that we will eat the meat. That hunter, when he comes back with the bear, and the sports hunter will take the hide, and will feed many, many people in that community. It is highly nutritious and a big delicacy.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'd like to have one quick follow-up to that very important comment.

The Chair: Sorry, you're out of time. You know what, though? There's more questioning. Just share it amongst yourselves, because we only have so much time. It is a good questioning stream, and I hope you pick it up.

We are being absolutely fair, if you have a look at the timing. We're always very fair.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiebe, I know that the gist of your points was on commercial and private redevelopment of built heritage. I strongly believe that a lot of the incentive to do it should be from the government leading by example, and I think that's what makes things so effective in the States. The government is really good at maintaining its own historical sites.

How would you rate the Government of Canada and its crown corporations' ability to maintain its historic sites?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think the States has an interesting example of the good that the general services agency has done on.... What is it called, crown assets? There's a whole program that they have where they've taken these iconic buildings, which were designed—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm sorry to cut you off, but I'm really limited in time. I'm curious to know how you find the federal Government of Canada and its crown corporations do with respect to maintaining their built heritage.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think the federal government departments do a reasonably good job in some respects, but the crown corporations are not restricted. I know that Canada Post—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you think the crown corporations should be obliged to restore their properties? We have this weird system in Canada where crown corporations are exempt from the requirements to maintain their built heritage.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: Yes. I think that would definitely be a progressive measure. Crown corporations, including ports, Pickering airport lands, among others, and these iconic post offices....

What I would say about the federal management of buildings—and it comes to another point I think Mr. Stetski made—is with regard to disposal and who gets the buildings or who should be getting them first. I think the federal government, when it's disposing of its own buildings, places like Booth Street complex here in Ottawa, puts them on the open market for top bidder through the Canada Lands corporation. I think there should be consideration for different kinds of levels and maybe not getting the top dollar, but getting good dollar and having it go to the right people. That kind of recalibration of that system will get better results in terms of more interesting places and more honouring of that federal heritage.

● (0955)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I represent Kingston and the Islands. We have, according to the Canadian heritage registry, about 96 national historic sites, some government-owned, some privately owned. In Kingston we have an original CN train station. This is the site where the first prime minister of Canada travelled to and from Ottawa. Numerous individuals, including royalty, have travelled in and out of the city. Many different presidents visiting Canada, especially back in the day, would come in and out of this particular station.

What we've seen, not by design but in the way the system is set up, is that we end up with demolition by neglect. CN owns this station. It wants to sell it. It's literally been sitting abandoned for years, and now it looks like this. It's hoarded off. The roof is completely gone. It's completely falling apart. CN won't do anything about it.

Do you think there should be more incentives or more requirements for these crown corporations to actually take care of their properties?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think with a case that falls between the cracks—well, between the tracks, on railway land—in terms of who's responsible for it, in that case there is remediation and other things around it. It would be important to tighten up some of those rules so that we wouldn't have these iconic buildings languishing in between jurisdictional elements. In that case there would need to be some kind of tax credit or something that would give extra incentive for a developer to step in and actually do something with that building. That would be extraordinary.

Take, for example, in the other part of Kingston, the mental hospital Rockwood, down by the prison. It's been languishing there for, I don't know, a decade?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: There's the women's penitentiary and now Kingston Penitentiary.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: Those are other examples of iconic buildings that don't have an answer, that need to have a boost to transition into something useful, to have some useful future.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Can you give any kind of specific recommendations that the government should adopt on that in terms of policy?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: In terms of the transition of railway stations from railway ownership and the requirement to have them designated at the local level, railway stations and railway properties are completely above the law. Provincial governments can't touch them with designation, and municipal governments can't. Even the federal government can't. That's why it brought in that special legislation, which was created basically as a mechanism to move those iconic places into private ownership.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: As a matter of fact, as a point of interest, when I was mayor of Kingston, we started to issue property standards notices against this property because of the way it was essentially just derelict. The federal government's response, through its crown corporation, was “we won't do anything about it because we don't have to, this is federal land”—that type of thing.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think those rules could be tightened. I think there are ramifications for grain elevators, roundhouses, and other important properties on railway property.

The Chair: That's why you were elected to come up here and fix it, right?

Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for coming. I appreciate that.

Karen and Madeleine, I come from southeast Saskatchewan, the southeast corner. I have eight first nations in my riding. I was interested to hear you talk about shared history and shared reality. We have a lot of small museums in there that actually try to showcase the shared reality we have in the riding. You talked about indigenous-led aspects and design. Can you comment a bit on how you would see something like my riding share some of that, especially when I hear about sharing the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, etc., and those buildings?

Ms. Karen Aird: It's interesting: I'm sitting here listening to everybody talk, and I'm thinking about how different our perspectives are. We're talking about built heritage, and I work every day at the Kamloops Residential School. That's where my office is. I work with the Secwepemc. That site is built heritage. It has layers of meaning for us. That site is the site of a burial ground, an ancient village site. It has a horrific history.

We sit there every day and we look at it. It's falling apart. There's no money to actually do anything to restore it, even if they wanted to. But we also have caretakers. We have traditional caretakers who come in and cleanse the building, who do ceremonies. We have people who take care of the fire when someone dies, for the ancestors, for people today who pass, for the old ones. So when I think about built heritage and we're talking about how we're going to actually have a shared relationship, I think that how we braid this relationship, how we bring it together, and the fact that we are even starting to talk are really critical now. This is the first time Madeleine and I have actually had a chance to sit down to talk with all of you.

I can't speak for the indigenous people in every province, but this conversation needs to be had nationally across every province. I think that's where we start, and I don't think I would feel comfortable talking about what needs to happen in Saskatchewan without that conversation.

● (1000)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

Chris, you were talking about heritage homes. My mother was a heritage history buff, and when I was little, she dragged me through England, through every church and every historical part of England, so my knowledge of English history is quite massive. It was to the point that my parents actually bought a heritage home in Bath, Ontario. They had that house. It was built circa 1813, and they restored it as well as they could, but the reality is that they were passionate about it. They cared about it, and they also understood that they took on the responsibility for it.

How do we encourage people to do the same thing that my parents did, at their cost, their dollar, and with them recognizing the issue of that?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think it's about recognizing the public value of those acts of care and the stewardship of these valuable resources. An 1813 house of that nature is incredibly rare, and I think there should be mechanisms that help encourage that, because once there's an owner who is not sympathetic and that building is lost, it's lost forever.

I think there aren't very many mechanisms to assist with heritage homeowners currently. In Ontario, there are property tax incentives that are quite, quite modest, but there need to be other ways, levers to help encourage those kinds of people. I think there also needs to be, as Julian was also mentioning, expertise and help for people to make the right decisions. I think the federal government can help on the financial side as well.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: The interest is not so much financial as it is how we get them motivated to do that. If all we're doing is putting in the money to get them motivated, we're now putting the onus on somebody. What we think about today as today's history.... Ten to 40 years from now, people are going to look at what I think is history, and because of the way generations evolve, they will be thinking totally differently. So how do you encourage that, without putting money into it?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think it's about connecting with what Madeleine and Karen and Julian were talking about, in terms of putting it in a larger context. It's not about the idea that John A. Macdonald slept here and that's the important thing about this building; it's about the fact that it's there and that we need to take better care of what we have in terms of the ecological sustainability of our society. I think we're at 60% overreach in terms of our resource consumption on the planet this year, and we can't really afford....

When you put heritage conservation and landscape conservation in the context of something bigger ecologically in terms of using what we have more thoughtfully, I think it actually connects with a whole new generation and it connects the ecological, cultural, and social dots in new and exciting ways for people.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you. I'll share my last quick question with Rob.

The Chair: You have thirty seconds.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: I'm okay.

The Chair: That was good, because we're running back and forth between you two guys. Everybody's—

Mr. Robert Sopuck: If I have a little bit of time—

The Chair: You don't, actually. I've just used it up. I'm sorry.

Voices: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: That's not fair.

The Chair: I'm sorry. I am not being particular to you. We're probably going to have more time, so we'll go another round.

Julie.

● (1005)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you.

I find this discussion really interesting.

I'll start with you, Ms. Aird. What I've been hearing goes to the heart of definitions about how we define heritage preservation. I was wondering if you might be able to provide a definition. If you cannot, what would be the process that we go about to find a definition for that concept?

Ms. Karen Aird: I can talk about it in terms of repatriation, in terms of preservation. Within most indigenous societies, when you talk about things that are shared or known, we have individuals who are knowledge keepers. They're people who are responsible for preserving objects, remains, our sacred bundles, and our pipes and for keeping our ceremonies. Generally, a lot of those people exist kind of underground, I would say. They're not known and you don't meet with them because they're not politically active. They might be politically active in some cases, but most of the time they sort of exist within the society.

We have traditional mechanisms. We have traditional methods for preserving remains and for caretaking objects. I know that, for the medicine bundles of the Blackfoot, for instance, that were in the Guggenheim museum, there were people whose role in the Blackfoot society was caretaking these objects. They're considered living entities often, these objects, so when we approach conservation and preservation, I really think we have to approach it with a very open mind and with a willingness to share and learn. I think that it's going to be uniquely different across the country, how every indigenous group wants to deal with preservation.

I know that the Royal BC Museum is in the process of doing some work around repatriation of language tapes, of oral histories, and of human remains. At most museums in B.C. and the universities that have human remains, those objects and those remains are going back to the indigenous caretakers at the indigenous communities, because we need to move away from this paternalistic attitude that people don't know what they're doing. When they come back, we have our ceremonies and we have our ways of caretaking these. Often they're reburied, but not always. Sometimes people will choose to let them remain within a repository.

That discussion really needs to happen. As I said, the round tables we had in Ottawa were sort of the beginning of these discussions. It was fascinating, because we had so many different groups that came, and they all expressed a need to really have a dialogue. I think there's a willingness to have this dialogue nationwide. I think people are ready for it, and even talking about preservation is going to be quite an interesting dialogue because you're going to see that it'll be different across the country. I know it'll be different for Madeleine's people as well as for mine. We're dealing with Site C in northern B.C., so we have a lot of human remains and objects that have been uncovered. We've chosen some of those to be stored in a repository down in Vancouver, in Burnaby and that area, and some we're trying to get back.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you for that.

In the last budget, part of the Heritage budget was toward archiving oral histories, I believe. I was wondering, does that fit within this preservation of heritage, the preservation of oral histories as part of an archiving fund?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: I think it absolutely can, and it's a challenge because part of it is also having to have the resources to have those stories told in our communities, to have them recorded, and to give our people that opportunity. It's not just a single story; there are many, many stories. There also needs to be a process to determine where they get archived. There's value in the Library and Archives Canada at the national level, but there are very few of our own archival institutions. In Nunavut there are no archives except for the one for the government. There's nothing whatsoever outside of the government. We have no cultural performance centre, even. These things are living stories, so when Karen says.... It's sometimes even challenging to explain because it doesn't fit with the constructs or the systems that are pre-existing and understood in mainstream society.

● (1010)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: All right.

I have a few more seconds. The other fund I want to talk about is the cultural spaces fund. Mr. Wiebe referred to it as a bit of an either-or to heritage preservation. I see that aboriginal people's institutions or organizations are eligible, and that it goes toward “the improvement, renovation and construction of arts and heritage facilities”.

Have you been able to access cultural spaces funding as part of this preservation?

Ms. Karen Aird: I work with our communities in northern B.C., where I'm from. Treaty 8 purchased the Charlie Lake Cave site. It's a 10,500-year-old site. It's one of the most significant sites in Canada, and it also shows the first evidence of ceremonial use in burial. We purchased it to bring it back so our people could use it, but we also want to develop a cultural centre.

If you look at the cultural spaces fund, you see that there are all sorts of criteria that have to be in place before you can apply for it. We purchased it in 2012. We've had small projects and budgets come, but you have to show I forget how many years of good standing, and you have to have an audited statement. There are so many loopholes that you have to go through. It's really challenging. Then, what you can use it for is extremely limited.

The Chair: Okay.

We have time, so I am going to give Mr. Stetski six minutes. This time I'm going to give six minutes to the Conservatives and six minutes to the Liberals, and then I can come back for three minutes to Mr. Stetski. That pretty much gives everybody an additional six minutes.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

It's kind of a small question. Should the federal government be setting up a separate national heritage organization to address indigenous priorities, or are there already organizations or federal departments in place that just need to do a better job?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Fund the Indigenous Heritage Circle first, because we need to have the resources ourselves, and then we can begin to have those important dialogues with the existing federal departments. Funding a separate federal entity would take resources away from the indigenous peoples. It would also be creating a colonial system with a colonial approach, rather than actually putting the resources into this organization. Even if it's not us, the reality is that some national indigenous heritage organization needs to exist.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Wiebe, does the National Trust currently have a role working on aboriginal culture and heritage?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: Yes, it does. Actually, in the last three or four years, more of the focus of our national conference and the work we do has been around indigenous heritage issues. In Calgary in 2015, we had an event called Moh-Kins-Tsis, a Calgary indigenous heritage round table, which was associated with our conference. There we were talking about the integration of planning and the integration of indigenous culture.

Calgary is a really interesting example. There is that interface, that exchange between indigenous cultural knowledge and European cultural knowledge in city spaces. Calgary has these incredible layers of indigenous history that aren't really reflected in the narrative that the city traditionally tells itself.

We've been having very early conversations around that. It's in addition to some of the round table work that the Indigenous Heritage Circle has been doing. We had another one in Hamilton recently, where we were talking with...worked with the groups on Six Nations and the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and had a discussion around consultation practices. We are working to integrate that more firmly into our work.

Ry Moran was a keynote speaker at one of our conferences last year, and this year there is going to be another round table embedded in our conference. I think it's progressing quite rapidly.

● (1015)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: I am trying to sort out—and maybe through the other witnesses we'll get there—how many different organizations or federal government departments have a piece of this discussion around indigenous heritage, and whether pulling it all together in one spot might actually be a more efficient way to accomplish things. I don't know whether you have a view on that.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: It's without a doubt an interesting question and dilemma, because as far as we're concerned, when we did an assessment of the political administrative landscape, it turns out that there are probably way more departments than you realize that have some role or some aspect, but they're not even aware of it. That's what we found shocking.

If you have federal properties, that's one area, and anything that has to do with innovation, economic development, and technology. We have all those elements in our own societies, but there's not often any thought or outreach for inclusion for us to even be part of those conversations. More often what happens is that, when we become aware of something, we have to almost jump up and down and go, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, you forgot about us. Where are we in those economic development, science, technology, or innovation conversations?"

Concerning the broad spectrum, community and infrastructure, what tends to happen is that you'll have a department, let's say Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and then everything's just relegated to that one department. If it's Canadian Heritage, then that's relegated in one department. There's very little bleeding out into that holistic view or process.

I also caution that what can also happen is that you then have a little add-on rather than coming at it from "let's have a new way of thinking and a new way of doing".

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Is that in the form of a written report that you could share with the committee, that look that you've done across—

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: We can produce it.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That would be great.

I have a quick question for you, Mr. Smith. Did you say that the tax credit should focus only on income-producing properties, or don't forget income-producing properties when we come to Bill C-323?

Mr. Julian Smith: I would just say that the emphasis should be on income-producing properties. I'm no expert on where the finance department comes out on this. I would just say that's where, in my experience, you have the best return on investment, in the income-producing properties. If someone has a private home and they turn it into a bed and breakfast, it is ineligible, but that's allowing it to become a semi-public space and be able to share in the benefits of that. I have some worry about a purely private residential property in that category.

The Chair: Great.

Next up is Mr. Sopuck.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Thank you.

Ms. Redfern, I was very struck by your eloquent description of the polar bear hunt and the relationship between the polar bear hunt and the preservation of the culture. Some day I'll have enough money to do that myself.

Again, this is to the government members on this committee. Because polar bears are a very contentious issue under the Species at Risk Act and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, I think we should take the side of the Inuit on this particular one, unequivocally support the hunt as strongly as we can, and fight all those forces who would do their best to put this culture out of business, because that's what they would largely do. Here we have a success story. Let's continue it.

I'd like to quote from the testimony of Mr. Peter Williamson, who spoke at the indigenous affairs committee hearings on suicide rates. This is in relation to culture, land, and wildlife. He says:

> I want to talk about a couple of issues I think will make a difference. One is I really started noticing a difference in how many young people committed suicide after their parents and their aunts and uncles and their grandparents could no longer afford to go hunting, because living the traditional lifestyle and being brought up in a community and in a family where the traditional lifestyle is the way you are brought up really does make a difference. We started losing that in the 1970s, and the 1980s too, but it started in the 1970s. Once that happened, more people did commit suicide.
>
> There was what were called the seal wars at the time, when Greenpeace and other environmental activist organizations who wanted to raise money started to attack the sealing industry, which Inuit were a part of. They really relied on seal hunting to make a living.

He made the obvious connection between the pride of retaining a culture and providing for a family in a sustainable manner, but also, I think, the appalling connection between these rich outside groups who basically, even though they didn't say it, worked their hardest to destroy a culture.

Could you comment on this particular episode and how you see this playing out?

● (1020)

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: It's a very complicated and loaded issue inasmuch as we desire, and rightly so, the ability to be self-sufficient and the ability to make our choices, especially if they are sustainable and the science supports these hunts. They are without a doubt important rites of passage—the ability to provide for oneself, for one's family and one's community, and the nourishment that comes from these hunts, not just the food but the connection and spiritual relationship of being able to go out on the land and to share that knowledge and that tradition with your children. There are a lot of stories and legends, and environmental knowledge, science, and technology. Without a doubt, it is an embodiment of a way of being, of part of your identity.

As it relates to heritage, there is where, again, it's very difficult to.... It's all-encompassing, an activity that is part of our heritage. The relationships we have with each other and transferring that skill and that knowledge are part of our heritage. There's a lot of work yet to be done to fully educate not only Canadians but others as well, that as long as it is sustainable....

I go back to the Brundtland commission definition. You can have different values. You can have different ways to achieve those values. We have different cultures. At the end of the day, whether it's the United Nations rights on indigenous peoples or just the fundamental United Nations rights as a human being, we should respect those differences, embrace them, and celebrate them.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Yes: very, very well said. I had the opportunity in a previous life to participate in an Inuit caribou hunt with the Netser family from Coral Harbour, who I'm sure you know. Because I was young and strong at the time, and was able to carry a quarter of a caribou, they nicknamed me “Pungnik”. I'm very proud of my Inuit nickname. I checked with enough people, and it is a compliment. Knowing what I know about aboriginal humour, at first I thought it was the north end of a south-facing caribou, but it turns out it's not a bad name to have.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Anyway, I very much appreciate your eloquent answer. You can rest assured that on this side of the table, we will defend, until the very, very end, your right to hunt seals and the ability to ensure that the polar bear hunt continues.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Mr. Smith, you talked about the national building code and changes that you think might be necessary. To be honest, going into this study I didn't really consider that much. At least in Ontario, section 5 of the building code specifically talks about restoration, so one of the challenges to people restoring property is what they are going to have to do to get it up to current code. Section 5 specifically talks about stuff like, if you go to insulate an exterior wall, and you don't have enough room to get to R24, but you can make it to R16, you're improving what was there before, so that's seen as a good thing because you're making it better than it was.

I don't know if the national building code addresses that. I'm only familiar with Ontario's building code. Can you talk a little bit about whether that's the kind of change you're looking for and whether it's addressed? If it isn't, how it could be addressed?

● (1025)

Mr. Julian Smith: I think the reason the national building code has to be looked at is that you can always debate bylaws—you go to a committee of variance and they're adjustable—but you can't argue with the national building code or the provincial building codes. They're the law. There is an NFB film called *Still Mine*, which is a commentary on building codes. There are a number of issues.

You're right; Ontario and B.C., in different ways, have added sections to the national building code, when they adopted them by the province, to try to deal with the unique character of existing places. We also have, increasingly, immigrant communities that are bringing all kinds of different lifestyles to Canada, and the national building code doesn't recognize that. For example, bedrooms have to be a certain size. The idea of mixed use is not clearly explored in the national building code. We should be looking at that. If you want a small bedroom, why are you not allowed, under the national building code, to have a small bedroom? Doesn't that allow for smaller houses, which is more sustainable?

The national building code comes out of the 1950s. It comes out of that whole idea that we fit into these boxes and we are building suburban homes. I worked with a first nations community in the Yukon. They wanted to build log homes, and CMHC wouldn't allow them. They said that if you look at the theoretical model, they don't work as well. Well, the theoretical model may work fine if you have a stud wall with insulation, but in the north it doesn't work very well.

That committee is so fixated on protecting and defending the national building code as it exists—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: To be fair, some of it may have been built out of.... If you allow for really small bedrooms, you could end up with landlords building these buildings just trying to maximize profit. Where is the balance?

Mr. Julian Smith: That's exactly the issue, but that's where this top-down approach that the experts know best and everybody will follow the expert rule.... That's why the OMB exists in Ontario. I think it's going to see the end of its life fairly soon—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I hope so.

Mr. Julian Smith: —and that's a good thing. We live in a 1950s structure. As you said, the first nations don't even exist in that grid. They are invisible. We have to start over on some of these things, and the national building code is just one of those areas.

If you go to that committee, you'll see that it's mostly industry representatives who are selling the kinds of products that were used in London on that high-rise that burned to the ground. That's not a good place to get a—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's great, thanks. I promised to share my time with Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

This is week two of our study. Part of what I'm looking at is how do we recommend to the government that the finite resources that we hope to have available for heritage be divided up? As I look, I see some pieces of the pie. One of them is going to be places the federal government owns: national historic sites, federal heritage buildings. There are going to be federally designated sites, the family of national historic sites, the third party owned and operated ones. There is the federal stewardship role, the collection of properties that are on the federal heritage register.

I see there are new initiatives, this whole question of indigenous and how we engage with indigenous heritage. Then there is the other big part. We are going to be spending billions of dollars in the next decade on the parliamentary precinct. I am concerned that the federal government will simply say, “There, we've spent billions of dollars, check mark”, when we could actually be working across the country on a whole bunch of fronts.

In the seconds that are left, could each of you give some thoughts on that? How do we divide up this pie to have maximum impact across the community?

Mr. Smith, go ahead.

Mr. Julian Smith: I was responsible for the master plan for the rehabilitation of the parliament buildings in Toronto. I worked with a committee of five MPPs, who directed the whole process. I am astonished that Centre Block is about to undergo what will probably be a $2.5-billion to $3-billion renovation without being directed by a committee of parliamentarians and without having first nations representation on it. Why should we spend that much money and not have Parliament buildings that begin to reintroduce first nations into Canada and our identity, as expressed on the Hill?

I really worry about that project. I think it's being controlled by a small group in Public Works, and Public Works is getting about $1 billion out of that budget for themselves, just to administer it.

I think that's a huge problem. I think parliamentarians should take over that project, the way they did in Ontario. They bypassed their public works department entirely and hired us as consultants to report to Parliament, which the House of Commons could do, and the Senate and the library together. I'll just say that on this issue.

Otherwise, I think it's much more important that the federal government not just deal with its heritage properties—I set up the federal heritage building program 30 years ago—but look at its accommodation patterns and where federal money supports all kinds of other initiatives in the country. That's where the U.S. federal role has been the most significant. Every federal department is required, first, to look at accommodating itself in a place...other than having Parks Canada in Les Terrasses de la Chaudière. That's ridiculous, when those owners do take the risk and create heritage property, and nobody from a government agency will come and rent it from them. I would see the emphasis there.

● (1030)

The Chair: The question was asked to other members. Do I have the will of the committee to hear from the other two and go a tiny bit longer? We do have the time on the clock. Is that fair? Is that a questioning stream you're all interested in?

Let's hear from the other two parties on that question.

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: One of the things that I think almost all indigenous people would be concerned about is our inclusion just being the ongoing practice of including artwork in the buildings and nothing else, or words being written by non-indigenous people about what our heritage is in those spaces.

As it comes to the question about how we divvy up the programs and funding that's available, we do make up 4% of the population, and I don't think we even get 4% of that funding, ever. I can tell you, from the past few years—as Karen has reiterated many a time—we have volunteered our time. I think for the most part, right across the country, you will see that indigenous peoples are struggling outside of our own communities to get any recognition to be able to participate. Even when we are allowed to participate, we're expected to do so without any resources.

At this point in time, anything would be better for us than the current status quo.

Mr. Chris Wiebe: I think it would be interesting to see a really ambitious program that was moving forward, perhaps incrementally, on all fronts. I think it would be a lost opportunity if that didn't happen. I understand there's a need to have the federal government get its house in order in terms of its management of its own heritage buildings or in terms of the national historic sites that Parks Canada and other departments own. I think there's a need for some kind of expanded funding for non-federally owned national historic sites.

In terms of something like a tax credit or some other kind of funding model that would be able to touch Canadian communities across the face of the country, it would be a huge impact and would be an interesting leadership role for the federal government. Obviously, it's showing its own leadership through the handling of its own iconic places throughout the country, but I think in terms of seeing a broader role for itself and that support for this kind of work around the country, the tax credits would be something important to look at. It would be mindset-changing and game-changing for a lot of people to see they're supporting this kind of development. It would shift development thinking, I think, and people's thinking.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Thanks for the patience of the committee to hear from all of you.

You have three minutes, Mr. Stetski, and then we're done.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with the structure of the board of National Trust for Canada, but I'm thinking, just in terms of a general practice, should the federal government mandate that any organization they give money to with a board have indigenous people on that board? I'm not sure what the current situation is with National Trust.

Do you have indigenous people on the board currently?

Mr. Chris Wiebe: Yes. Our vice-chair is Lorna Crowshoe. She is from Blackfoot First Nation from Calgary.

The National Trust was set up with an endowment and sent on its way back in 1973, so we don't receive any funds from the federal government now. I think it's important for all organizations to have first nations, Métis, and Inuit members on their board. There is now a new board member, Mr. Suluk from Nunavut, who's going to be coming on to our board this year. I think that's an important—

● (1035)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: What about as a general practice? Would that be considered part of reconciliation, really, to ensure that there are indigenous people on every heritage board that the federal government funds?

Ms. Madeleine Redfern: Without a doubt, it's a first step, but it's not the only step. What I recognize, having been on several national organizations or NGOs, often as the only indigenous person, is that it's a challenge to try to influence a long-stated, pre-existing mindset or culture within the organization, even at the governance level. For the most part, the heavy lifting and the day-to-day stuff happens in the staff, and there's a lack of indigenous people within the organization as a whole. You are often only one of.... Sometimes there could be 12 board members, and they tend to continue to function very much the way they did before.

Ms. Karen Aird: I've sat on quite a few boards as well. I do think it is a good step; I agree, but I also think we need to move beyond that, because you're seeing now there's a movement beyond just a voice. People need to make changes, systematic changes. In terms of all the boards I have sat on, there's just not enough of you to deal with all the issues and all the involvement. It often takes away from the real work we're trying to do in our communities.

One of the things I find challenging, too, is that part of it is that you're educating people about indigenous perspective and indigenous heritage. That's great, and it's very beneficial, but it does take away from our real work of what we are trying to do. If we go to every conference and meeting and educate people, we're not able to try to protect those areas in our communities and really work. That's happening with our leaders and everybody.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I really appreciate each one of you taking the time to come and spend it with us and share your wisdom. You've given us a lot to think about, and I think we're starting to see how we're going to be able to make a difference with some recommendations, hopefully.

Before I end the meeting, I just want to let people know that next Tuesday we will have the commissioner first thing in the morning. I welcome you all to be there, please. That would be great. Then our meeting is going to be at 3:30. That's a bit of a time change there.

Also, on Thursday we're going to have a subcommittee meeting. That is John Aldag, Mike, and Mr. Fast. We're going to have that from 3:30 to 5:30, because Mike has a committee meeting right after this meeting. We can't have subcommittees directly after this meeting as we used to, because Mike can't be there.

I'm hoping that works for you guys on Thursday. Okay? All right.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.