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Chair

Mrs. Deborah Schulte

Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

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● (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.)): We'll get started. We have a full agenda today and we have our guests with us. I want to make sure we respect their time and give them a chance to get started.

Welcome, Lisa Prosper. Thank you very much for joining us today.

From the Parks Canada Agency we have Genevieve Charrois, director of cultural heritage policies, and Norman Shields, manager of heritage designation.

We have 10 minutes for each of you, and then we'll move into questioning. I have a little routine where, when you have one minute left, I just hold up the yellow card, and a red card when you are out of time. I don't want you to drop what you're saying, but just wrap it up quickly.

Lisa, the floor is yours.

Ms. Lisa Prosper (As an Individual): Thank you very much for the invitation and for this opportunity.

I would like to start by saying that I fully support the comments made at a previous session by Ms. Aird and Ms. Redfern during their session with you on the 28th. I applaud the work that they and the Indigenous Heritage Circle are doing. It's not my intention today to overlap too much with what they have already articulated. Instead, I hope my comments will complement theirs.

I'd like to take this opportunity to focus on the subject of indigenous cultural heritage quite broadly. I tend to be a conceptual thinker. I may be taking you higher than you've gone in previous sessions, but that's just sort of where my head works.

I'd like to start by talking a little about the specificities or the characteristics of what we might call indigenous cultural heritage generally—absolutely respecting that each community will define and express that in their own way, but there are sufficient similarities in distinction to a western notion of cultural heritage that are identifiable.

I would start by saying that there is a general focus on the non-material, so it doesn't typically focus itself on material as built heritage. It often has to do with the performance of cultural practices on the land, so there's an interrelationship between cultural practices and land-based activities. Heritage is often an activity and enactment of land-based activities—for example, narratives and storytelling related to the land, and traditional knowledge associated with travel on the land. Language—the naming of people, the naming of places—is a very integral component to indigenous cultural heritage, as are clothing, tools, and cuisine, all interrelated with the expression of cultural heritage.

Other characteristics are that these are often quotidian sorts of practices rather than the exceptional or the ceremonial. They are that as well, but they are also daily. One of the other features is that they are fundamentally present-based, much more focused on being present-centred. We often think about heritage as about history and about things from our past. It is that as well, but it's a present-centred focus.

I wanted to set that up in distinction to what we are comfortably identifying as heritage practice. That is the identification, protection, and conservation of places of significance, and this activity is core to how we define ourselves through identity construction. It's a way of telling us and future generations something about ourselves and our history as a nation, as a culture, and as a people.

The apparatus that we have in place—not just us, it's the heritage apparatus—is born out of a particular trajectory, and is, in my opinion, ill-equipped to currently address the context of indigenous cultural heritage.

So in order to do that, I think the field generally needs to entertain some fundamental shifts in their thinking, shifts in their concept of what heritage is. One of those shifts, I would say, is scale. I think we need to start thinking from the individual to the broader. One way of doing that is to think about landscape. Landscape is a helpful lens to start to think about how elements are interconnected rather than in their singularity.

I think we need to start thinking about dynamic and living heritage rather than static, and to understand that cultural resiliency is often expressed through adaptation. That's another area in which the presentness of heritage is an important factor.

I think we also need to start to understand the intangible and the ephemeral, and how to somehow understand this relationship between practice and place, not just form and fabric alone but somehow this interconnection between those two things. We need to maybe think about perpetuation alongside conservation so it's not just the act of conserving but also perhaps a focus on perpetuation.

Again, as I mentioned, we need a shift more towards present-centred thinking rather than a focus on the past, and I think also a shift to subject from object. Built heritage is focused on the object. Of course, it understands the story associated with that place, but it starts with object and then moves out. I think maybe we need to think about starting with subject and moving towards object.

I raise that specifically in relation to issues of climate change. There is an effect of climate change that will be affecting cultural heritage and cultural practice profoundly. The change in the movement of herds—caribou, for example, where I am currently living—is a preoccupation. The loss of the movement of caribou, for example, will mean that the traditional knowledge associated with the typical patterns of that caribou herd will change. If there's a loss of language, that will be difficult to communicate. The elders who would have had time on the land as part of their upbringing are passing, so that knowledge is being lost. So there's a shift. There is a relationship between the climate change effects on the natural side of things as it affects the cultural side as well, and we need to keep that in our sights as well.

I think the accommodation of these shifts in thinking requires investment at the intersection of types of heritage. We need to start thinking about where heritage overlaps and how we can invest in understanding and accommodating that better. The current structure is that there's built over here, there's intangible over here, and there's natural over here, and so on and so forth. The full gamut of indigenous cultural heritage spans all of those and interconnects all of those. In order to accommodate it, we're going to have to start thinking about those intersections and overlaps.

We also need to start thinking about notions of cultural sustainability. When we use the word “sustainability”, we can't simply focus on environmental sustainability. Cultural sustainability is a big part of that, and what are those elements? They are the languages, the practices, the places, and the interconnection of those.

I realize that I'm probably not providing you with answers. What I'm really trying to do is encourage you to ask different questions. What are the needs of the communities? What role does heritage play in their well-being and in their prospering? Focus on how heritage is valued and why heritage is valued rather than what is valued, and conversely also the role it plays in cultural well-being and sustainability.

● (0855)

I would caution moving forward with amendments or changes to natural and conservation tools or legislation that entrench an existing paradigm—or at least bear in mind some of these other shifts in thinking.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Prosper.

I am sure you have generated quite a list of questions. That was very, very interesting testimony, and different from what we've heard before, but it built on some of what we've heard before. Thank you for that perspective.

Now we have Genevieve Charrois.

Are you going to start?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois (Director, Cultural Heritage Policies, Parks Canada Agency): I will start.

[*Translation*]

Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for your interest in the conservation and presentation of Canada's cultural heritage.

It is a privilege to be before you today to share some of Parks Canada's knowledge about the commercial heritage properties incentive fund, CHPIF, a contribution program that Parks Canada administered between 2003 and 2006.

● (0900)

[*English*]

The commercial heritage properties incentive fund, known as CHPIF, was one of the key components of the historic places initiative, known as HPI, a federal, provincial, and territorial initiative launched in 2001 to address and foster the conservation of Canada's historic places.

The older components of HPI were, as you've heard, the Canadian register of historic places, which is a pan-Canadian listing of all historic places recognized as having local, provincial, territorial, or national significance; the standards and guidelines for the conservation of historic places, the benchmarks for understanding and conserving built heritage sites; the certification program, a due diligence process to ensure that conservation measures are compliant with the standards and guidelines; and the historic places initiative contributions program.

CHPIF was announced in budget 2003 as a $30-million pilot contribution program to test the demand of the commercial sector for rehabilitation and the effectiveness of HPI's accountability tools.

[*Translation*]

The CHPIF program was designed specifically to respond to the ongoing and significant loss of heritage properties across Canada by compensating businesses for a portion of the costs incurred in conserving eligible commercial historic places listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places.

The goals of the program were to: save threatened historic properties from demolition or destruction; preserve historic properties for future generations through proper conservation; and develop new or enhance existing commercial purposes for historic properties.

[*English*]

The contribution program, influenced by the U.S. historic preservation tax incentives, provided contributions to eligible recipients for 20% of the eligible conservation costs for the rehabilitation of an eligible commercial historic place up to a maximum of $1 million, and used the Canadian register of historic places, the standards, guidelines, and certification process to determine eligibility and ensure accountability.

Over the course of the CHPIF, 35 projects were completed with total costs of $143.4 million, and CHPIF contributions representing $14.95 million.

During a formative evaluation of the CHPIF conducted in 2007, it was found that the scope and impact of the CHPIF program were limited by the program admissibility criteria that limited contributions to taxable corporations with commercial projects rather than to commercial projects independent of ownership; the program admissibility criteria, which excluded strata and condominium development; the uncertainty concerning the stability of funding under a three-year program; and the refinement of criteria and procedures typical of a start-up program.

[*Translation*]

Some often cited obstacles to contribution programs are that they require more than double the time for approvals at the front end of projects, which erodes investor confidence at the time of decision-making. They also have funding caps for annual programs and specific projects that limit the potential for application in urban areas.

Still, the 2007 formative evaluation also concluded that CHPIF demonstrated its ability to engage a broad range of taxable Canadian corporations in proper conservation consistent with national conservation standards and guidelines.

[*English*]

It was demonstrated that the program had generated a number of indirect impacts in the wider economy and in social benefits as evidenced by: provinces and municipalities applying national conservation standards and guidelines to non-CHPIF projects because CHPIF had shown the usefulness and the usability of the standards and guidelines; other contribution programs being developed in parallel by the provinces and territories; many proponents having asked for their property to be designated and/or listed on the Canadian register of historic places in order to be eligible to benefit from the financial incentives of CHPIF; and CHPIF program and certification having developed close working relationships with provincial and municipal authorities.

A subsequent study by Deloitte in 2010 concluded that the CHPIF program resulted in a number of direct measurable impacts or benefits for the commercial heritage properties assisted through the fund, including significant economic growth reflected by increases in building occupancy rates, business-tenant revenues, and property values.

To put numbers to those statements, CHPIF was found to give rise to substantial economic impacts: an average increase of 60% in building occupancy as a result of CHPIF funding; an average increase in business-tenant revenues of $0.3 million; an average increase in property value of $4.16 million; and direct employment impacts of $59.65 million and direct income tax impacts to the magnitude of $19.87 million.

[*Translation*]

In addition to these quantitative impacts, CHPIF imparted a number of additional qualitative benefits to communities across Canada such as: reinstating and renewing heritage assets into functional and contributing structures; initiating economic development; retaining and utilizing local and regional trade skills; building nationwide awareness and engagement; shaping and preserving a community's and country's identity; enhancing national diversity; building a critical knowledge base; and potentially supporting environmentally sustainable practices.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

● (0905)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start with the first round of questioning. We might not have time to do the full second round of questioning. We might or we might not. Normally, we would start on the second round and then cut it off when we run out of time because we're going to go into report-writing recommendations.

I'm wondering if you would be accepting...because that leaves Wayne at the very end and not likely to get a chance to ask questions. Would it would be the pleasure of the committee that we would do a second round, if we have to cut it, that would include Wayne? So it would definitely be Conservative, Liberal, and potentially NDP, out of the sequence that we're normally committed to.

Does anybody have a problem with that? I'll be watching the time. If we can fit it in, great, but it looks like we don't have enough time to do a full two rounds. Does anybody have a problem with me being fair to everybody and giving everybody a chance?

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Well, because it's Wayne, I think we'll—

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You'll accept it? Okay.

I'll keep an eye on the clock and see how much fairness we can have. I just wanted to be mindful that he might get cut off and I wanted to know if we could do that.

It sounds like I have the agreement of the committee. Let's start the round.

Mr. Aldag.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Great.

Good morning, and my thanks to the witnesses for being here.

Thanks to Parks Canada for the explanation on the CHPIF program. It is one program that we had heard about related to tax incentives. We've also heard about the cost-share program, which is a different mechanism for supporting heritage based on grants and contributions.

Genevieve, were you involved in the CHPIF program?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I was involved at the end of that program. I was the manager of certification. Mainly I was working with the conservation architects who were doing the assessment of eligibility of projects and whether they were doing the right thing compared to the standards and guidelines, the statement of significance. The way we were doing the work was to ensure that the heritage characteristics of the building were protected as work was going on, so conservation architects were sent to projects to assess that. I was the manager of that team.

We used to go to provinces and territories as well, to assess their expertise in conservation, so it was not just the federal government that was conducting that. We were administrating the program of certification, but we were also asking the provinces and territories to contribute to the work.

● (0910)

Mr. John Aldag: Are you able to comment on the administrative similarities or differences between the CHPIF program as a tax credit or tax incentive versus the cost-share program as a grant? Administratively, is there any additional burden to one or the other, or are they comparable in the amount of time—

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: They are comparable, because they are both contribution programs. One is for non-profit, and the other one was directed to the private sector. We're running the cost-sharing the same way we'd been running the CHPIF program. We have certification officers, service providers, but they are within Parks Canada now; we're not tapping into the expertise of others. We have the statements that are still on the register. You need to be on the register to be eligible for the cost-sharing. Standards or guidelines are still the benchmark that we're using to assess projects.

So in fact they are both working the same way. It's just that it's not targeted to the same audience.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay. I had misread that. So CHPIF actually was a grants program.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: A contribution program, yes.

Mr. John Aldag: Okay. Perfect.

Dr. Prosper, your testimony was very thought-provoking. I think you really hit the question that we've been struggling with, or you expanded on it. That is, how do we commemorate indigenous heritage, which is very different from what we've seen in general Canadian society, where, as you said, we're commemorating things from the past as opposed to the present? I wonder how we move forward. One of the things I've been looking at is that the truth and reconciliation report has a recommendation on commemorations. It indicates that one way to move forward is to have indigenous representation included on the historic sites and monuments board. That's probably one mechanism to give a better lens to make sure that we're inclusive.

Is that going to solve the dilemma, the issue, the challenge you've put out to us, or is there something else we need to do? We heard earlier in the week that maybe we need to rethink how we commemorate indigenous history. I really would like your thoughts: how do we move forward on this?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: Thank you. I should clarify that I'm not a doctor, although I appreciate the vote of confidence.

In my mind, there is a very broad spectrum on what constitutes heritage, and commemoration is one vehicle or tool or method of one act of heritage. In fact, that's one of the problems. Indigenous cultural heritage has a commemorative component, but it is also very much on the complete other side of that spectrum, which is simply cultural practice. The challenge is what role the federal government plays in enriching or somehow contributing to the sustainability of those cultural practices while understanding that its primary vehicle is commemorative, which is over here.

I would say that in some ways that is a question.... Generally, to echo Madeleine's comments, I would say it's indigenous defined and indigenous led. It's not so much an invitation to have indigenous representation at the table; I think it's a little bit more that they need their own table. There are going to be a lot of conceptual issues but also practical issues that are just going to have to get wrestled with. The solutions are going to have to be discovered over time, and I think co-operatively. The work that the IHC is doing is sort of generating a bottom-up mandate for that community, but I think that community then is going to need someone to speak to in the government, in Parks, for example. I think the renaming of that department indicates an interest in addressing that.

● (0915)

Mr. John Aldag: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. That was very enlightening.

Mr. Godin.

[*Translation*]

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

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning to provide us with information, so that we can draft a good report.

My first question is for Ms. Charrois.

As far I understood from your presentation this morning, CHPIF was a program with some positive aspects. Is there currently a similar federal program with the same objectives as that fund?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: There are none when it comes to built heritage sites as such.

Mr. Joël Godin: So, if I understand correctly, you would like the government to consider bringing back that program?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I would not go as far as to comment on that. However, I am simply saying that such a program did exist and it worked. That said, it only lasted three years. It was a pilot project. There were also some issues related to the fact that the program was very new. Assessments found some positive and some negative aspects.

I think it would be something to consider.

Mr. Joël Godin: I appreciate your answer.

Since you participated in the management of that program, could you tell us what positive aspects we should use as inspiration when implementing mechanisms and programs in the future? What would be your priority recommendations?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: That is an excellent question that would require further consideration. But I can perhaps give you some answers.

Right now, my testimony is more personal than that of a public service employee.

The relationship we had with other entities or governments was working fairly well, and I think that was relatively encouraging. To be able to provide funding to sites that are not the federal government's responsibility, that have designation levels other than federal or national, we have to have the support of the provinces and territories, which also own sites, in general, even if the designations are municipal.

I think that relationship, combined with the great expertise at the Canadian level, was a major success, since we were able to provide conservation standards and practices that were universally acquired in Canada and were shared by everyone. That requires another type of action that only the federal government can take.

Mr. Joël Godin: In your presentation, you mentioned that the CHPIF was one of the components of the HPI, which was a certification program—a quality control process.

The issue with conservation is the reliance on the good faith of stakeholders. However, if no legislation applied, the government could not intervene and require certain conditions to be met. What happened in that program when people did not apply the prescribed guidelines and standards?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: A contribution program is still different from a grant program. At the outset, before an agreement is reached, the program will impose certain constraints. Even before signing a contribution agreement, the applicant is told what will be required of them for their project to be funded. Then an agreement is signed between the two entities. In the case of non-compliance with the agreement, which did happen once, no payment is made.

Mr. Joël Godin: So, in that case, you did not pay out the money prescribed by the agreement.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: Exactly, but that was really an exception. In general, people wanted to get the money.

Mr. Joël Godin: I can understand that. Oh, oh!

I now turn to you, Ms. Prosper. We share your opinion when it comes to protecting aboriginal culture within its various components.

I am trying to understand something. You said that you wanted to protect living heritage. We heard from a witness, Mr. Moran, from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, who did not disagree with that proposal, but who added the importance of protecting cemeteries that have been subject to disgraceful behaviour in the past for our young aboriginals.

In a perfect world, we would protect everything and would have ensured that what was done in the past would be preserved to help us know our history and the history of our roots and our country. However, you will understand that we have to choose, since we are not living in a perfect world. We are striving for it, but funding is an important factor that unfortunately requires us to choose.

What is your position when it comes to the non-living heritage and the living heritage you are trying to protect?

● (0920)

[*English*]

The Chair: The challenge I have is that it has taken all the time to ask the question. We're out of time to get the answer, and I think the answer is a little bit longer than a yes or no.

Hon. Ed Fast: It's a great question.

The Chair: It's a really great question.

I'm hoping that one of your colleagues will pick that up and we can get that answer shortly, or—

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Madam Chair, he can have my time.

The Chair: Okay. Let's hear the answer, then.

I appreciate my colleague giving us that flexibility.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Lisa Prosper: Could you repeat the crux of the question at the very end there, on the comparison between landscape—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: We understand what would be done in a perfect world. However, financial support requires us to make choices between protecting non-living heritage and living heritage. I'm just saying that to illustrate my point. Guide us toward the choices we must make.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Prosper: That is indeed a good question. I guess I would say that the broad objective should be to get to a place where the indigenous community sees themselves reflected back to them in what is recognized as Canadian heritage. How does that happen? The immediate steps are to work within existing frameworks. If the Historic Sites and Monuments Board is the vehicle by which movement can happen, and then therefore the recognition of important sites to commemorate, if you want, a sort of backlog of potential sites for commemoration, is a possibility, and some sort of recognition of the residential school system and various other elements that are out there. They're on people's radar. They know that these are areas that need to be discussed and recognized but have not yet figured out exactly how to do that.

So absolutely: it's investment in the existing framework and how that can adjust in the short term. I would still say that the broader and maybe longer-term goal is to start this shift and to at least not re-entrench a paradigm that will continue to have difficulties to address a different set of assumptions or a different set of parameters that define indigenous cultural heritage.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Stetski.

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

I'll start with you, Ms. Prosper. A few years ago, a niece visited us from Germany. She was in grade 11. The number one thing she wanted to do was to meet a first nation from Canada, because they had been studying Canada's indigenous people in their classrooms in Germany. What do you think of the concept of providing funding for first nations tourism as a way to preserve and protect their cultural heritage?

● (0925)

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I think that's a very important aspect to this question. In fact, tourism is the one area of the big pie of heritage that I don't often think about. However, I think your question is quite pointed inasmuch as the advantage of that is, of course, authority of voice, which is a critical component in all heritage. It's the ability and the power to be able to tell your own stories. If investment in indigenous-led tourism promotes and enables that activity, then I think that's a positive thing.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

This is a question for either of you, perhaps. You've been involved with the funding of heritage in different ways over the years. What's the best way to protect Canada's heritage, moving forward?

My second question is a little more difficult, perhaps. We also have Canadian Heritage, and we sometimes hear that Parks Canada.... I'm a Parks Canada critic for NDP, but an advocate for Parks Canada as a whole. We sometimes hear that Heritage kind of takes second spot to Parks Canada because of the amount of work they have to do and the resources they have to protect across the country from a natural perspective.

What do you think? What's the best way to protect Canadian heritage, going forward? Is Parks Canada the right agency to do it, perhaps with more funding?

Mr. Norman Shields (Manager, Heritage Designations, Parks Canada Agency): I'll take the second question.

Parks Canada has reported to a number of ministers over its long history. As I think everybody at the table knows, since 1999 we had the Parks Canada Agency Act, and eventually transferred over into having a direct reporting relationship with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I think it's well beyond my station to comment on the appropriateness of that, but I would simply observe that the way Parks Canada Agency is organized is that there are a number of directorates, and each has an equal place at the executive management table.

I think I should end with that comment.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I'm going to build on what my colleague just said, but more in terms of Canadian Heritage versus Parks Canada.

I was asked in a previous question if there are other types of funding available, and yes, Canadian Heritage provides funding. Typically Canadian Heritage is more concerned with what I would call the “intangible” piece of heritage. They will sometimes fund infrastructure, but it's going to be through the fact that the place is, for example, an exhibition place. It's about the exhibition place, not so much about the heritage place, per se, that they are interested in.

That's how I can define what the two different departments are doing. One is more on the intangible, and the other one is more with the tangible. Parks Canada is about built heritage and the designation of built heritage.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Within that, what do you think is the best way to protect heritage, moving forward? You've worked with a couple of programs, but the one you were speaking about ended in 2003, which was a long time ago. Moving forward, what would you like to see happen? We are looking for recommendations on how to make things better for heritage.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I don't have a definitive answer to that, but if you ask what the simplest way to do that is, contribution programs are always easy to put together—or easier. That's not to say that it is easy, but it is something that we know better. We know the mechanisms, and we know how to put things in a way that will work and be efficient. We have accountability tools that would come with that.

I'm not saying this is the only mechanism, or the only way to do that, but this is a way that we know, and we know it works.

● (0930)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Stetski.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That's okay.

The Chair: Okay. Jolly good.

Mr. Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Thank you.

Ms. Prosper, thank you very much for your testimony this morning. You certainly bring a different perspective.

I want to see if I can understand an existing analogy to express where you're coming from. A year ago we were in Haida Gwaii, and it was very much about place. It was very much about the structures, but encapsulated by the land and the sea, built into that place with the historical structures.

In my own community, the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte are on their traditional hunting grounds, so it's not as much about place necessarily as it is about culture. As far as place goes, the only historic place that they really look to is Christ Church, a church that was built in the 1700s. It's kind of the focal point. But for them, it's more about the powwow, language, art, a new wellness centre, a lacrosse rink, weekend programs in the bush, a sweat lodge. These are the cultural heritage that they have built that is new and existing and that they now use as the expression of themselves and the importance of that expression.

Do I have that right, that this is kind of where you see, from a cultural heritage standpoint, that it doesn't necessarily have to be about place, but it can be expressed and help to make people whole through these expressions?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I guess I would say that it's still the interrelationship of those two things. A lot of those activities are still place-based inasmuch as they are connected to the land, or inspired or derived from land. Land-based, place-based, I think drives a lot of cultural activity. Of course, every community is going to privilege or prioritize or find expressions that they invest in, one over the over.

A bit to answer the previous question in combination with yours, thinking about heritage as place-based is a good place to start. So I think it still does live within Parks Canada as maybe the lead agency. But, yes, it is very much about the contemporary expression and activation of cultural identity and its relationship to place.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

Ms. Charrois, what type of heritage made up the 35 projects? Can you give us a sample?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I have a short list here, which I prepared just in case you asked for some examples.

In New Brunswick, there's the CenterBeam Place, which is half of a corner of a.... It's really a block of buildings downtown. In the same province we have the Hartt Boot and Shoe Factory, an old factory that was refurbished for commercial use.

We have in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, La Fabrique.

[*Translation*]

That was an old site that was converted into a commercial space with several owners.

[*English*]

Parkdale Fire Station No. 11, here in Ottawa, used to be a fire station but is now a school. They teach cooking.

We contributed to Gooderham and Worts in Toronto.

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm sorry, but I don't want to run out of time. The reason I'm asking these questions is to find out what percentage of the properties were rural.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: There were some, but rural is.... I would say they were in small downtown areas. We funded and contributed to a former post office. I recall that one a little more.

So it was not so much rural, with the exception of one project we had in St. John's, Newfoundland, which was a small hardware store.

● (0935)

Mr. Mike Bossio: Was there any particular reason not much of it was rural?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: No, no real reason. The program was launched as a pilot; the tools were created. The promotion of the program took a moment to really make its way, so we weren't getting all these asks at the time of the program.

Mr. Mike Bossio: If you were to re-establish the program, are there any mechanisms you could see that you could put in place that would emphasize the rural component? There is so much historic property on the rural side, and we're so....

Where there's a lack of funds in rural areas that are more impoverished, if we can't rely on the contribution of funds from the federal level of government, then these are just going to fall apart and disintegrate.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: We'd need to be very, very active where these buildings are. We would need to network with communities at municipal meetings. We would need to be out there for the program to be known.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Was there even really a rural component to the registry itself?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: There is not that angle, but that's part of it. It's not because you're rural or not rural that you are listed or not listed. In Ontario, it all depends on the LACAC and what they put forward. If the people at the community level are very good at promotion, the buildings will be listed, so I don't see this as being a barrier.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sopuck.

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

Ms. Prosper, I listened to your testimony with great interest. I approach culture more from an ecological perspective. I think cultures develop out of the landscapes and ecosystems they inhabit. I think for many of our aboriginal people that's a principle that's fairly well established. I really liked your phrase—I think I got it right—that aboriginal people want to see themselves reflected back in Canadian heritage.

To follow up on Mr. Stetski's questions on first nations tourism, the hunting and guiding industries in Canada employ a lot of aboriginal people. I myself went up to a fishing lodge this summer at Gods Lake, and there were local Cree people as guides. It's a place where they are the authorities and where you listen to them. You may be paying them, and they may be your so-called employees, but when you're on the water with them on a rough lake, you listen to them.

How important are those kinds of activities, and should we work to enhance those?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I guess I would shy away from pronouncing on that. Again, I think community-driven, and the authority to make the distinction between the role that would play in their broader approach to their own heritage....

I don't know, but I appreciate your comment.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Of course, in the modern world there is a need for cash. That's not like it was 100 years ago.... Well, yes, it is, but it's not quite the same.

We discussed an interesting example with Madeleine Redfern, the Mayor of Iqaluit, who was here last time. I think it's more in line with what you were saying, about communities being in charge of tourism. That's the Inuit polar bear hunt. People come from around the world and pay a lot of money, like $100,000, but the rules are very strict. A set of traditional clothing is made for the hunter; they use dog teams only; and it's as close to a traditional hunt as it could possibly be. It's done without any government subsidies whatsoever.

Is that more in line with what you're thinking of as the kind of tourism in which the communities are in charge and it's done in a traditional manner? Is that a way to help preserve this culture?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: Again, I'm going to shy away from that a little bit. I'm a little hesitant to say that only traditional modes are where the investment is required, because we need to understand these communities as contemporary communities.

● (0940)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Again, I focus on the wildlife issues because that's my main area of interest.

Let's talk about the seal hunt for a minute. There was a study done by the standing committee on Inuit suicide. I quoted from the committee last time, and I'll quote it again. Mr. Peter Williamson testified before the committee, and he said:

> 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....
>
> 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....

I could go on, but it's fair to say that if we were to bring the seal market back and have a thriving market in seal pelts, we would see a resurgence in a form of a traditional Inuit culture. Is that a fair comment, in your mind?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I think there are a lot of communities who would identify land-based harvesting practices as an integral part of their cultural identity, yes. I think the ability to continue many of those harvesting activities will contribute to cultural pride and also provide a vehicle for the transmission of traditional knowledge from generation to generation. It's part of the puzzle, for sure.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: The great partnership between aboriginal people and Europeans in the fur trade back in the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s obviously transformed aboriginal culture. It became in a way money-based; nevertheless, that culture was allowed to flourish. How well do you think the fur trade and the activities of the fur trade are being remembered in Canada these days, Ms. Prosper?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I don't actually know the answer to that one.

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll have to end that there.

Mr. Amos, I know that you're going to split your time.

Mr. William Amos: I'll pass it to my two colleagues.

The Chair: Super.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): How much time do we have, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have six minutes. Mr. Fast has taken up the three that were taken over by—

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay, I'll go fairly quickly, because I know Mark wants to ask some stuff as well.

Ms. Prosper, I loved your phrase “shifts in thinking”. It reminded me of the Heritage Circle testimony from last week. I'm guilty of thinking of heritage as bricks and mortar. I think many people are when we think of that topic, so “shifts in thinking” struck home.

We know that indigenous artifacts are stored through Parks Canada at laboratories run by Parks Canada. There's one such one in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, my riding. How can we better work with our indigenous peoples through the spirit of reconciliation to preserve what matters to them most and to ensure that, when those artifacts are protected, they're more readily available to indigenous peoples?

These artifacts that are stored in Parks Canada facilities across the country are not really open to the public. I think you can make an appointment and come in and see these things, but those artifacts that belong to indigenous Canadians aren't really readily available to the public. How can we, as a government, move towards making sure that those indigenous artifacts can be accessed?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I can't really speak to the specifics of how to execute that, but I appreciate the thinking. I would say that in fact the museum field is a little bit ahead of the heritage field inasmuch as the reconciliation, if you will, of indigenous peoples with their artifacts. There may be guidance from that discipline to understand how to reintroduce the two, how the communities can access artifactual pieces, and how that relationship may develop.

I think there are also interpretive opportunities there and cultural revival opportunities. It could spur the retelling of narratives that may not have been told or are being lost, for example. I think there's a lot of potential in that particular nexus, and I would suggest looking towards the museum field for some guidance.

● (0945)

Mr. Darren Fisher: So rather than a storage of artifacts, it would be more of a museum style.

Ms. Lisa Prosper: For example, the museum field is thinking about what they call “open storage”. All I'm suggesting is that there may be practices in place, and they've already wrestled with the questions that my help to facilitate that.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

The Chair: Over to Mr. Gerretsen for three minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): My question is for Parks Canada.

Just for confirmation, Parks Canada is no longer looking to acquire new properties. Is that correct?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: Are you talking about national historic sites, per se?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: We're not acquiring new sites right now.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that a firm directive, or is that just because there's nothing that looks appealing right now?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I think it's linked to a budget line that we don't have.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. I just wanted to get that on the record.

What are some of the challenges you encounter in the preservation of heritage sites under the current regime?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: Can you repeat that about the challenges?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What are some of the challenges you face in the preservation of those? Is it budgetary?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: There's not just one, of course. There's a multiplicity of barriers and things that we see.

I mean, it's also based on the build itself. It's hard to explain what is of heritage value in a building. It speaks to the elements of a building. But when it comes to intervening and you have competing priorities—for instance, you want to have windows that are climate controlled—you have to deal with that. It comes down to details often in terms of how to intervene. You've heard others—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What role do you see Parks Canada playing—I know this is an ongoing discussion—in the telling of the story of that heritage place? It's one thing to restore the windows; it's another thing to promote and to tell a story.

I'm asking you to be critical of yourself: is Parks Canada good at that part of it?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I don't think we're too, too bad. In fact, the idea of having a register and having multiple registries, where we are listing the character-defining elements of places, statements of significance, the tools we're still using, the standards and guidelines —

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I was thinking a bit more specifically about tourism.

I want to ask another quick question while I still have time. In Kingston, Ontario, Parks Canada owns Fort Henry, which is a fortification site. There's an arm's-length organization called the St. Lawrence Parks Commission that runs it.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that a good model of a relationship?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: It's a model. It's a model that may work in some places; it may not work elsewhere. It depends if there's a third party that can run the place as well as we would, and with the same criteria that we would use to administer these places.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: So there are times when it's successful and there are times when it's not so successful.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: Exactly.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: That's great.

Mr. Fast, three minutes.

Hon. Ed Fast: I want to go back to you, Ms. Prosper. You made the statement that indigenous communities “need their own table”. How would you see that actually coming to fruition?

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I guess what I was thinking is that I know there is already an aboriginal affairs secretariat within Parks Canada. I'm not exactly sure of its role. I am also aware of the recent change in the name of the cultural sector to include indigenous heritage. Yet it seems as though there's opportunity to populate that portion of the naming of that department. I was thinking about whether, within that, there could be the promotion or the development of a team of indigenous people who would start to wrestle with these issues and engage in these conversations that Madeleine was referring to in terms of charting a way forward so that the conversation isn't just strictly outside of the government. I think it needs to be inside as well. It's just how to have that develop to move forward together.

● (0950)

Hon. Ed Fast: Okay.

You started off your testimony by suggesting that yours were very high-level concepts, and you're absolutely right. This is a well-grounded committee. Ultimately, when we issue a report, we like it to have recommendations that are grounded in the evidence, that are going to move the government forward in achieving its objectives. If you had to leave us with some foundational information about what programs might be helpful, what we should be looking at, what would those be?

I have a limited period of time—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Hon. Ed Fast: —and I'm looking for a couple of ideas that are very real rather than conceptual.

Ms. Lisa Prosper: Can I answer that in written form? Can I make a contribution afterwards?

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes.

The Chair: Yes. I was going to ask everyone to do that.

Ms. Lisa Prosper: I would appreciate that. I think I need to drag my brain down to earth.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. That was just enough time there.

Mr. Stetski, you have three minutes.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Thank you.

I want to follow up quickly on Mr. Bossio's question around protecting rural heritage. My riding of Kootenay—Columbia is pretty rural in nature.

Would you agree that criteria used to select heritage projects should not in any way work against rural areas being successful? I'm thinking about criteria like usage afterwards and contributions from local government. I was a mayor; I know how hard it is to come up with money. Is it possible to make sure that any contribution agreements are neutral in terms of working against rural municipalities, moving forward?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: I believe that this is work.... If that's the way that the program should be built, I think we would have to go and find out if there are barriers for rural properties in terms of being treated the same way, and then ensure that this is not the case. There are ways to do that. I would say yes.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: In terms of recognizing national historic sites from an indigenous perspective, is there an official process currently in place to do that, and do you have any recommendations for improving the process?

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: The process is the one of the national historic site designation.

Maybe Norman will need to add to my comment here, but basically, a site could be a landscape. It could be an indigenous landscape. There is no restriction. It could be an archeological site as well. The notion of a national historic site is broader than just the building. It can be multiple things within that.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: That's for designations, but you're not acquiring any new sites.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: We're not acquiring sites.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Even if they have an indigenous value to them.

Ms. Genevieve Charrois: No. Well, we are administering Saoyú-?ehdacho in the Northwest Territories. That was our last acquisition. It's an indigenous landscape. It has no built heritage on the landscape. That was the last acquisition.

Mr. Norman Shields: I might just add to that.

While we're not acquiring new sites at this time, there are properties that we already administer that have been designated. A really good example of that is the Ramah chert quarries up in the Torngat Mountains. That's property we already administer that has a strong indigenous heritage perspective.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Does anybody need 20 seconds...?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I want to thank you very much for being here today. As you can see, we're really grappling with how to make things better and how to properly respect indigenous heritage.

There were a couple of questions. One was asking if we could get what worked and what didn't work out of that CHPIF program, because we really want to understand what we can do with any recommendation there.

Concrete recommendations from you, Ms. Prosper, about what we can do to be more respectful and move that initiative forward would be extremely helpful. We're moving into the report-writing stage now, so we don't have a lot of time to get that. I know that our analysts will be anxious to get it as soon as you're able. That would be fantastic.

Again, thank you from all of us for being here and sharing your wisdom with us.

I'll suspend for a few minutes and then we will move in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]