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6-18-1973

## Conservation: Hearings, Reports, Correspondence (1971-1973): Correspondence 06

Charles van Ravenswaay

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June 18, 1973

The Honorable Claiborne Pell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

A small conference to consider problems relating to the training of museum conservators was held at Winterthur on June 15-16, 1973. Those present included the heads of existing training centers and their academic administrative officers, and representatives of federal and private foundations. We were very pleased that Mr. Livingston Biddle could attend the first day of the meeting as your representative.

All of those present were aware of your past and present efforts to strengthen museums and their services, and of your interest in seeking practical solutions to the conservation of the national treasures which museums possess as custodians for the public. On June 16, the second day of our meeting, the following expression of appreciation for your fine work was drafted and unanimously approved. I take pleasure in forwarding it to you.

The participants of the Conference on Museum Conservation sponsored by the Winterthur Museum and the University of Delaware, June 15-16, 1973, unanimously and warmly endorsed the enlightened efforts of Senator Claiborne Pell to bring attention to the pressing needs in the field of conservation of cultural property. The rapid economic and industrial growth of modern civilization seriously threatens the deterioration of our cultural heritage. The Conference strongly backed Senator Pell's attempts to provide guidance and support to meet the urgent conservation needs of American museums.

Charles van Ravenswaay, Chairman

With personal regards and every good wish for your continued efforts.

Sincerely,

  
Charles van Ravenswaay  
Director

## THE PROGRAMME

The "National Museum Policy" announced by the Secretary of State on March 28, 1972, describes a programme of decentralization and democratization for Canadian Museums. Essentially, this policy proposes that the movement of objects, collections and exhibits be increased and expanded throughout Canada for the benefit of more people.

The objective, therefore, is to better distribute those cultural resources which are obtainable through Canadian museums, both national and regional, to the end that the greatest possible number of Canadians be exposed to our national heritage.

The programme involves museums both small and large, with some emphasis on increasing the existing capability of the latter, to radiate beyond their immediate surroundings. Smaller institutions too are encouraged to upgrade their receiving and exhibition facilities to complete new and more effective exhibition networks. Moreover, the programme provides for the introduction of new buildings and facilities in localities which have not previously been served by a museum or art gallery. "National Exhibition Centres" will be created for such communities.

"The National Museums of Canada," the agency responsible for the programme, has, through its Board of Trustees, appointed a "Consultative Committee." To assist the Committee and the Board of Trustees, a "Secretariat" has been formed in Ottawa to collect information and consult with groups and individuals who wish to become involved in the programme.

Important features of the national programme for Canadian museums are described here briefly. Further information may be obtained through the Secretariat (address given on last page).

For the purpose of the Consultative Committee, the term "museum" designates a non-profit, permanent establishment exempt from federal and provincial income taxes, open to the public and administered in the public interest, exhibiting to the public for its instruction and enjoyment, objects and specimens of educational and cultural value, including artistic, scientific, historical and technological material.

## ASSOCIATE MUSEUMS

An Associate Museum is one which :

- a) maintains and displays collections of interest to the people of Canada, for the purpose of this Programme;
- b) shows a positive concern for extension activities by sending out and receiving collections and exhibits;
- c) has a demonstrated ability to radiate beyond its immediate surroundings or locality;
- d) has the competence to use expanded funds;
- e) meets the criteria that may be established from time to time for the purpose of the Programme.

A museum accepted as an Associate may expect, upon meeting certain standards, to receive continuing support under the Programme for activities and projects related to decentralization and democratization. Institutions receiving funds would retain control over them but would be required to submit a yearly report relating to the expenditure of the funds.

An Associate Museum will be expected to assist the Consultative Committee with the evaluation of regional requests for financial assistance and, in cooperation with other Associate Museums, to assemble, exchange and circulate travelling exhibitions and loan collections in Canada.

It is recognized that in order to meet criteria, Associates may need space, staff, equipment, supplies and other support which are involved in the process of planning, assembling, interpreting, crating, storing, shipping, receiving and displaying travelling exhibits and/or loan collections. Associates should already have some of these facilities, but they will have to supplement them in order to expand their activities. Funding may be for capital expenditures, staffing, operations, materials and supplies. In addition, it is expected that an Associate Museum may require staff generally known as "museum officers," or persons able to assist smaller institutions in identifying their needs and in planning for appropriate development. The basic role of the applicant museum is the responsibility of the government or board which governs the institution and the need for appropriate blending of programmes will be recognized.

The four National Museums have also been designated as Associates for the purpose of this Programme. Together with other Associates, they will be largely responsible for conducting the programme, since the movement of objects, collections and exhibits rests with larger institutions.

The following will be considered in the evaluation of applications in this category :

1. demonstrated local and regional initiative;
2. established competence of the applicant museum;
3. relationship of programming to the National Museum Policy;
4. relationship of the estimated costs to the significance of any project;
5. significance of those collections held by the applicant museum;
6. innovation of programmes which will tend to widen viewer-audience, whether urban or rural, and which open new sectors of museum activity.

## SPECIAL GRANTS

The funds under this part of the programme are designed to help museums and galleries, other than Associates, improve their standards so that they may receive better, more interesting exhibits. Some will be able to contribute exhibits formed from their own collections.

Areas which may need to be upgraded include exhibit space, humidity and temperature control, security, loading and unloading areas, workshop space, fire prevention systems, supplies and equipment.

In some cases, acquiring appropriate staff may be necessary.

Project applications should preferably fit well with provincial or municipal government priorities in the development of a network of museums. This may be ascertained through consultation with the appropriate authorities, including the Associate Museum concerned.

As with Associates, funding should support those operations required for the institution's participation

in the national programme. The following are some points which will be considered in the evaluation of applications in the category of Special Grants :

1. demonstrated local initiative;
2. established competence of the applicant museum to carry out its stated project;
3. consideration for provincial or regional priorities;
4. relationship of an application to the National Museum Policy;
5. relationship of an application to Associate Museum programming;
6. geographical justification and balance;
7. relationship of estimated costs to significance of the project and possible future cost implications;
8. significance of those collections held by an applicant museum and a demonstrated willingness to participate in loan exchanges;
9. innovating programmes which tend to widen viewer-audience, whether urban or rural, and which open new sectors of museum activity;
10. recognition that in many cases grants to smaller institutions will outweigh in relative significance those given to larger museums.

### **EXHIBITION CENTRES**

The funds provided by this category may be used for buildings, or parts of buildings, which can be equipped according to standards laid down by the Associate Museums, so that art, science and history travelling exhibits may be accommodated for the benefit of a community otherwise deprived of such an opportunity. Funds are available for the construction or improvement of buildings, for display equipment and facilities and in certain instances, for staffing.

There must be a local authority in support of the proposal which will ensure that the centre, once built, will function properly, receiving exhibitions of interest to its population. Proposals under this section of the programme should mesh with municipal or provincial plans and priorities, and should normally be endorsed by an Associate Museum.

The following will be considered in the evaluation of applications in this category :

1. demonstrated local initiative;
2. established competence of applicant;
3. consideration for provincial priorities;
4. relationship to the National Museum Policy;
5. relationship to regional Associate Museum programming;
6. geographical justification and balance;
7. emphasis on areas, both urban and rural, which are not presently reached by museums;
8. adequate materials-handling facilities and collection care in accordance with standards established by the Associate Museums;
9. while the Exhibition Centres are not expected to provide the high standards which characterize Associate Museums, they will nevertheless be asked to provide minimum security and staffing, adequate environmental control and receiving/display facilities.

### **TRAINING ASSISTANCE**

The funds under this section should help to increase the number of qualified persons required for adequate participation in the programme. Submissions for training assistance should therefore be prepared in the light of the needs created by the programme. This can best be done with the assistance of the Associate Museums, who can help to define needs, priorities and criteria as the programme develops.

Funds may be available to such training institutions as universities, colleges and associations for staff, equipment and space. Funds could also be used to assist with internship programmes in the form of salary compensation, travel and living expenses.

### **NATIONAL LOAN COLLECTION**

A collection of material is being assembled specifically for presentation in non-museum situations. A collection designed for public use, it will include items such as engravings, lithographs, serigraphs and

ethnological representations which are of quality but are inexpensive and easy to transport and display. It is hoped that this material will be exhibited in public places such as shopping centres, schools, national exhibition centres and smaller museums wishing to expand their exhibition programmes.

Upon the advice of Associate Museums, portions of the national loan collection will be available for travel to virtually any part of Canada.

### **EMERGENCY PURCHASE FUND**

The fund provides for the purchase of objects of great significance as national heritage and which may leave Canada by way of sale to foreign buyers. The fund can also be used to bring back to Canada important objects which may be purchased and added to the collections of Canadian museums and galleries.

There is often an element of urgency and in order to permit rapid action, expenditures from the fund can sometimes be placed under the direct authority of the National Museums of Canada. Judgement on the importance and value of objects considered for purchase must be obtained from the best qualified institution or expert in the country.

Objects purchased through the fund are not necessarily given over to the collections of the National Museums of Canada; they may be placed under the care of able, qualified and interested institutions, with the proviso that these objects shall remain available for loan under reasonable conditions. In certain cases, funds may be transferred to such institutions for outright purchase by them, with the same proviso.

### **CANADIAN CONSERVATION INSTITUTE**

A substantially increased movement of museum objects throughout Canada brings with it new concern for conservation. To safeguard our important collections as well as attend to a backlog of crucial restoration work, a Canadian Conservation Institute has been established. This will consist of a network

of five regional service laboratories across Canada with a headquarters laboratory in Ottawa. These facilities will be available to all museums and to the public at large, and the laboratories will be used for some training activity. Priorities in each regional lab will be set by a local committee. Conservation work will be performed for a fee, which may either be monetary or modified in terms of public availability of the object restored.

### **NATIONAL INVENTORY OF COLLECTIONS**

The purpose is to establish a comprehensive computerized data bank concerning all major collections throughout the country. Available then to all Canadian institutions, the information can be used in a variety of ways for such things as research, display and education.

The Canadian museum community will be involved in establishing control standards while administration and systems-design will be borne by the National Museums of Canada to which the overall responsibility has been assigned.

During the pilot phase of the programme, and at the expense of the National Museum Policy, it can be arranged that existing collections data be sent to a centralized Ottawa office where the information may be converted to machine-readable form. Later, regional processing centres may be created for more efficiency.

The retrieval process will be operable in both French and English and by and large, represent public information.

### **CATALOGUE ASSISTANCE**

Support under this category is aimed chiefly at preparing the museum for eventual participation in the National Inventory. It does not apply, however, to printed catalogue publications but rather to basic accessioning of the museum's collection in a format which can be readily converted to the National Inventory system. Research, staff time and materials in connection with registration and cataloguing would apply.

## MUSEUMOBILES

The task of providing a number of travelling museums on wheels has been assigned to the National Museums. Design and production of the first vehicles began in 1972 and two caravans will tour the Maritimes and Newfoundland in 1973.

Assembled around a variety of subjects, the museumobiles will represent didactic displays, utilizing objects from the collections of the National Museums.

Essentially they will travel to outlying towns and villages which do not have permanent museum facilities.

## INFORMATION

Information required by the Consultative Committee from applicants for a grant should include the following points :

- Description of the institution or sponsoring group, its role in the community, attendance, collections, physical facilities, volunteer and professional staff.
- Background and history of the institution and its collection.
- A clear statement of the project.
- The amount requested of the Programme.
- An audited statement or provincial budget.

## APPLICATIONS

Requests for information, application for funds or proposals for consideration should be addressed to :

*Secretariat to the Consultative Committee  
on National Museum Policy  
360 Lisgar Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0M8.*