[DATE]

[YOUR MP]

[ADDRESS]

Dear [YOUR MP],

As a member and strong supporter of the heritage community in Canada, I would like to express my deep concern for the lack of available funding for the conservation and preservation of cultural property held in public and private collections.

While the Government of Canada does offer modest funding programs to support our museum community, these programs have been diminished by years of cutbacks, and of the funds, very few are earmarked for conservation. As cultural institutions continue to struggle financially, conservation departments become the first to receive little to no funding, as preference is given to exhibitions and educational programs in order to generate visitors and revenue. However, without conservation, preservation, and restoration professionals, museums would have nothing to showcase.

The *Museums Act* is the only existing legislation for cultural institutions in Canada, and stipulates that the “heritage of Canada and all its peoples ... must be preserved for present and future generations.” Though this legislation is aimed solely at governing national museums, mission statements of cultural institutions across Canada have adopted this notion, yet fail to implement it. It is important to emphasize that the act of ‘preserving’ precedes any form of accessibility and knowledge sharing, and without providing the proper care for these collections, artifacts become prone to major deterioration and are rendered inaccessible to current and future generations.

According to the 2015 Survey of Heritage Institutions issued by the Department of Canadian Heritage, compensation and wages represent 42.5% of the heritage sector’s operating costs. These institutions also heavily rely on volunteers as they account for over 76% of the entire heritage sector workforce. Though the Government of Canada has promised increased funding for the Young Canada Works program by expanding the Youth Employment Strategy, these short-term opportunities are restricted to students between the ages of 15 and 30. Moreover, institutions that do qualify and obtain funding, generally offer positions related to exhibition and programming. These institutions are also incapable of offering full-time employment to these students following completion of their post-secondary studies. In order for this program to be sustainable, the federal government needs to invest more in projects that create long-term jobs to allow these institutions to function according to basic museum standards, and to be able to provide employment opportunities following graduation to emerging museum professionals.

As it stands, the Canadian Conservation Institute is the only federal agency of its kind that offers conservation services to the museum community. For this reason, the vast majority of provincial and community museums rely on submitting applications to their highly competitive programs in order to have artifacts undergo conservation treatments. Even federal institutions, such as the National Air Force Museum of Canada, do not have the capacity to employ a conservator even on a part-time basis to conduct treatments in-house. It is important to note that implementing preventive strategies and remedial conservation treatment by staff members is more cost-effective than having to organize large restoration projects to respond to damage to cultural property once it has occurred.

As Canadian identity is defined by our culture and heritage, the federal government has an important responsibility to preserve and promote this identity. We, as stewards of cultural property, must ensure we employ best practices so it remains available for current and future generations. This cannot be done without the dedication of financial resources for the conservation of cultural property and for the employment of, emerging and established conservation professionals. We are currently leaving our cultural property exposed to major threats that may render them inaccessible to future generations. For this reason, I would like to formally request financial assistance from the Government of Canada for the funding of conservation and preservation programs. This would represent a true investment in our heritage, and lead to public-private economic partnerships, help stimulate employment opportunities, and ensure the protection of our heritage for all present and future Canadians.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

cc
The Hon. William Francis Morneau, Minister of Finance Bill.Morneau@parl.gc.ca
The Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage Melanie.Joly@parl.gc.ca

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[Your local and provincial cultural heritage organizations]