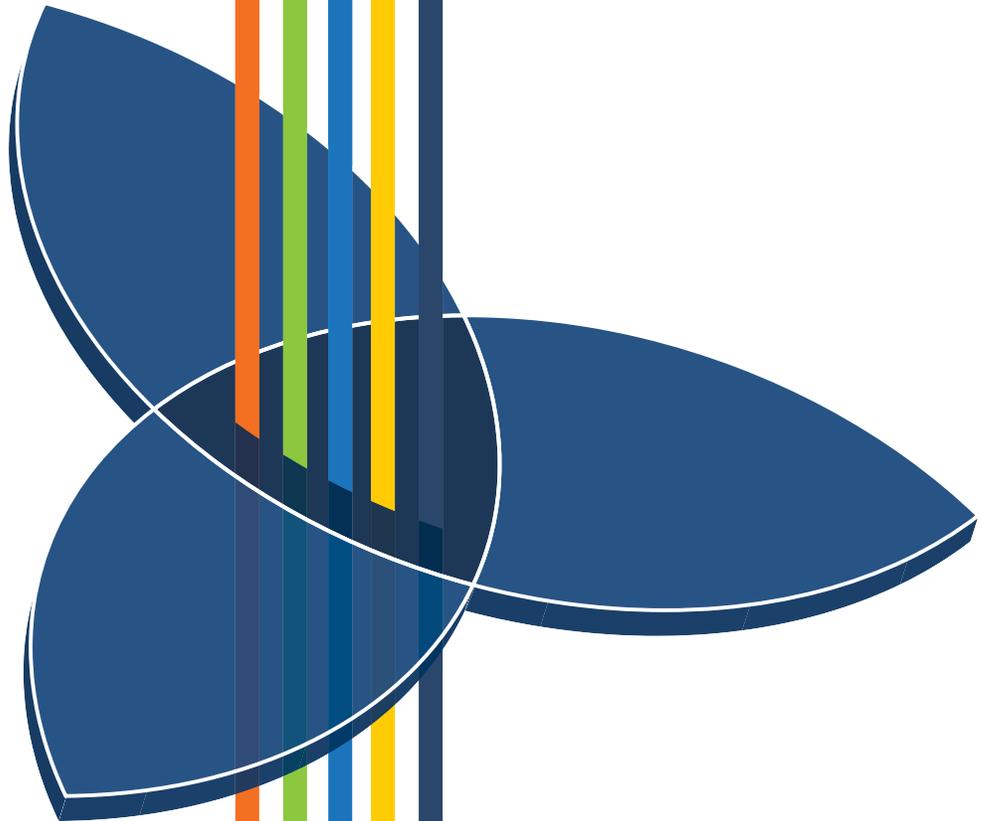


# ONTARIO'S MUSEUMS 2025 LOOKING AHEAD

TOWARDS A STRATEGIC VISION AND ACTION PLAN



LOOKING AHEAD TASK FORCE

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The Looking Ahead Task Force and Ontario Museum Association gratefully acknowledge the many people and organizations, without whom our work would not have been possible.

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**ONTARIOMUSEUM**  
ASSOCIATION  
**MUSÉES DE L'ONTARIO**





Discussions during the Looking Ahead Task Force meeting, January 2015 - Ontario Museum Association

These are amazing times — an era filled with rapid growth and changing economic, cultural and social realities. Faced with these changes, our group of museum professionals — supported by the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) — has come together to consider future directions. Known as the Looking Ahead Task Force, our group has worked to create **Ontario's Museums 2025** — a plan to foster a strong, united and relevant museum sector for Ontarians.

Our group's work has considered key sector issues and current conditions. We've studied widespread impacts of demographic changes, advances in digital technology, environmental concerns, and slow economic growth. We've also considered the prevailing political environment of fiscal prudence and accountability, and the increasing competition from both within and outside the museum sector for limited government and philanthropic funds. Many of Ontario's museums are addressing significant operational pressures, while at the same time struggling to demonstrate their economic value and social relevance.

As a Task Force, we have asked ourselves to be bold in considering this information, and to embrace a mindset open to new and innovative approaches. Although these challenges are difficult and complex, we see opportunities to fully realize the role of Ontario's museums as important agents of social development.

Ontario's museums are unique public institutions. Most are stewards of collections, caring for objects that represent our world and our place within it. These collections and the information associated with them — their stories — underpin museums' role as knowledge institutions. Ontario's museums connect people to objects, to information, and to ideas. Yet museums are about more than preservation, and they do more than provide access to information.

Museums use information to advance knowledge and help create meaning — both on a personal level and for the benefit of society. The best of museums facilitate conversation — in some cases they smooth the progress of respectful dialogue on difficult issues. As welcoming places, museums foster discussion of values; they help build social cohesion. These institutions create civic engagement and cultivate innovative thinking — a service that's critical today in meeting societal challenges. And finally, museums act as agents that shape and support community identity and quality of life.

**Ontario's Museums 2025** presents a vision of museums as organizations embedded in their communities — on local, provincial, national and international scales. It embraces a future in which Ontario's museums have achieved their full potential as organizations that better people's lives.

To achieve this vision, we must be open to critical and ongoing self-assessment. Furthermore, Ontario's museums need to work together strategically to advance the sector. Our group believes a focus on sector capacity building is needed. This paper is a first step in that direction.

**Ontario's Museums 2025** suggests a framework — a strategic vision and action plan. A first for museums in Ontario, we hope it serves as a pathway, one that leads from the current discussion of stability and sustainability to a future of renewal and excellence. **Ontario's Museums 2025** describes a process for concentrated actions in strategic areas to realize long-term objectives and outcomes. We ask museums and our partners to carefully consider this information, to engage with the process, and to provide feedback to help strengthen final results.

This is an opportune time for these discussions, as the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport develops its new Ontario Culture Strategy. It is

our hope that **Ontario's Museums 2025** will strongly position museums to partner with all levels of government, and to be increasingly relevant to all Ontarians.

Along with my colleagues, I would like to thank those who graciously gave of their time in interviews, completed surveys and participated in discussion groups. At last count, the number of people contributing to our work stands close to 300!

We welcome the continued role of Ontario's museums and our partners in the development of this work. Please read this paper through to its end, then reach out with comments. All feedback will be considered in finalizing the vision and action plan. With your participation, **Ontario's Museums 2025** will represent a bold, sector-led vision with robust actions that will position Ontario's museums for future success.

**Yves Théoret**

*Task Force Chair, OMA President*

### Looking Ahead Task Force

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*Royal Ontario Museum (to March 2015),  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (present)*

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*City of Hamilton*

Guy Labine  
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Xerxes Mazda, 2015  
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National Museums Scotland (present)*

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*Markham Museum*

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*Mississippi Valley Textile Museum*

Paul Robertson  
*City of Kingston*

Yves Théoret, Task Force Chair  
*National Gallery of Canada (to August 2015),  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (present)*



Having fun while learning about water resources at the Children's Groundwater Festival at the Waterloo Region Museum, Kitchener, Ontario, Summer 2014 - Photograph by Corina MacDonald, Waterloo Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival, 2014

Ontario's museum sector is in a state of flux. It faces the challenges and realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including massive economic, cultural and social change. Standing on the cusp of change, Ontario's museums are now presented with a critical opportunity — to embrace a meaningful public role, and to welcome a shift toward knowledge-based economies built on creative industries, skills and innovation.

With this in mind, Ontario's museum sector seized the occasion for a critical review, as well as a substantive rethink of current museum operations. For the first time, museum leaders came together to discuss the potential of Ontario's museums and to consider strategic directions.

Over the past year, this group, known as the Looking Ahead Task Force, worked closely with the Ontario Museum Association (OMA). Titled the *Looking Ahead Initiative*, the project established three long-term outcomes:

- Informed relevant museum strategies for Ontarians that foster accessibility and participation
- Improved sector capacity and communication
- Improved sector accountability and transparency

Initial work focused on research to:

- Identify sector successes and challenges.
- Determine the current profile of the museum sector in Ontario.
- Study innovative approaches from the broader museum sector and cultural sector.

This research, or evidence, supported the discussion of future directions, which was also informed by a broad consultation process, including:

- Input and feedback from museum professionals, volunteers and stakeholders through 140 online survey responses, 31 in-depth interviews, and four facilitated discussions (attended by approximately 250 people).
- An institutional survey completed by 177 museums.
- Ongoing discussions and engagement with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, as well as other public and private sector funders.

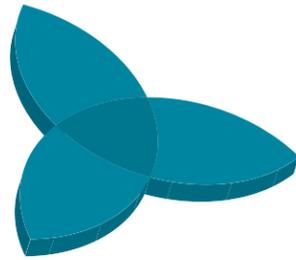
The findings indicate a desire for new ways of working to build greater public relevancy for Ontario's museums. Arguments were made for substantive and meaningful change — change that will lead to a repositioning of museums as powerhouse institutions contributing to strong societies and economies.

Important results of the Looking Ahead Initiative include this report's proposed vision for a sector-led transformation, as well as the suggested action plan to achieve that vision. Implementation and success will require the participation of governments, individual museums, and the Ontario Museum Association, as well as a reconsideration of roles and responsibilities.

## The Vision & Action Plan

**Ontario's Museums 2025** makes the argument for change. Museums can no longer argue public benefit based solely on their collection and preservation roles. Fundamentally, the group believes the emphasis moving forward must be on social impact. This repositioning reflects current understandings in the profession. It also clarifies the sector's "offer" in this highly competitive market, by clearly linking outcomes to core responsibilities — museums provide essential public services that better people's lives.

The goal of **Ontario's Museums 2025** is to move museums from a discussion of sustainability to a preferred outcome of strength and success. To that end, we propose a strategic vision based on the following four themes and their key outcomes:

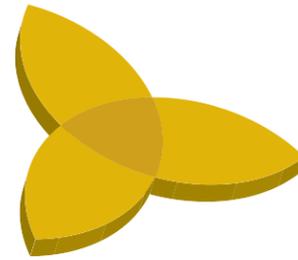


### Vibrant & Vital Museums

Museums are relevant to contemporary society in Ontario. They engage their communities, stakeholders, and the public in developing and delivering their work. Museums provide welcoming spaces for rich and layered experiences, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning.

#### Outcomes:

- Better contribute to the well-being and health of our communities.
- Enhance opportunities for Ontarians, stakeholders and visitors to participate in and contribute to the museum experience.
- Provide dynamic learning opportunities and experiences.
- Provide accessible and inspiring spaces for our communities, the public and visitors.
- Ensure museum work is relevant to our changing and demographically diverse population.

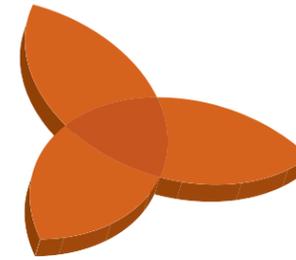


### Relevant & Meaningful Collections

Museums care for and develop collections for the public benefit. Museums enhance public access to, and interpretation of, collections to enable people to make meaning of their place in society.

#### Outcomes:

- Care for collections in a coordinated way.
- Explore new models for developing tangible and intangible collections.
- Enhance public access to collections.

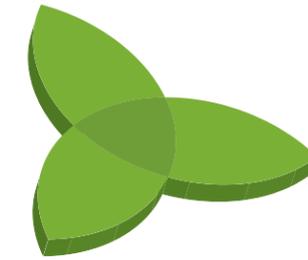


### Strong & Successful Sector

Ontario's museums contribute to growing our local, provincial and national economies. They collaborate and partner within the museum and culture sector, and within other sectors. Museums operate with robust and relevant funding models based on the support of government, other not-for-profits, and private-sector partners. They manage their operations, buildings and collections in a sustainable and effective manner.

#### Outcomes:

- Better contribute to community building through the knowledge-based economy, cultural tourism, and community regeneration.
- Develop new funding models, working with all levels of government and partners, so that museums can effectively manage their operations and provide relevant services for their communities.
- Promote Ontario's museums, creating a strong awareness of the role of museums and their contributions to Ontario's communities.
- Build greater collaboration and increase partnerships within the museum and culture sector, and with other sectors.



### Effective & Collaborative Workforce

Museums can demonstrate the impact of their work on Ontario's economy, as well as on Ontario's social and cultural vitality. They communicate their value to their communities and to Ontarians. Museum workers are recognized as highly skilled and dedicated professionals.

#### Outcomes:

- Develop and implement an ongoing research framework to facilitate museums' work and to demonstrate the social and economic impact of Ontario's museums.
- Develop benchmarks and performance indicators for Ontario's museum sector to foster excellence and relevance in museum work.
- Work towards effective human resource models that build leadership, foster innovation and support professional development.
- Consider new relationships among museums, the Ontario Museum Association, regional museum networks and programs for museum studies.

These themes and outcomes are supported by related actions, detailed in the full report, within a framework that embraces a multi-phased and multi-year process.



## VIBRANT & VITAL MUSEUMS

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## RELEVANT & MEANINGFUL COLLECTIONS

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## EFFECTIVE & COLLABORATIVE WORKFORCE

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## Next Steps

The Looking Ahead Task Force believes this work will help individual museums with their own strategic planning and operations. In the long term, museums will have access to – and use of – new tools, new models of practice, and research/data developed as part of **Ontario's Museums 2025**. This material and related training will help museums optimize limited resources, and will assist them in positioning themselves within their communities. Museums will also benefit by the efforts to increase public awareness and support of museums, the efforts to influence public policy, and the work to develop adequate funding programs that address the growing operational and capital requirements of museums.

The Task Force acknowledges that work has just begun to achieve these objectives. **Ontario's Museums 2025** represents one step in the ongoing and sustained conversation needed to realize a more collaborative and forward-looking museum sector for communities and Ontarians across the province.

The Task Force will continue working with museums, the cultural sector, governments, and the public to further develop this strategic vision and action plan for Ontario's museums. The purpose of this document is to continue some of these discussions, as well as to begin new ones.

The Task Force plans to consider all feedback. Please read this paper in full, then join the conversation. Your participation in developing **Ontario's Museums 2025** is essential to ensuring its success.





Igloo building at Nature Nocturne, Canadian Museum of Nature, April 2013 - Martin Lipman, © Canadian Museum of Nature

“It is good we are starting somewhere and we will be pushed to keep up. Inertia is too comfortable.”

— Sector Scan Participant

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.

*International Council of Museums, 2007*

There are approximately 670 museums<sup>1</sup> in Ontario, located in every region of the province. These museums are incredibly diverse — from not-for-profits run by volunteers, to professionally staffed provincial agencies. Most often associated in the minds of the public with the subjects of history and art, museums can and do

include archives, historic sites, science centres, botanical gardens, even zoos!

Museums are significant economic drivers. Ontario museums spend \$758 million in communities across the province; they employ 10,765 Ontarians.<sup>2</sup> Museums are also intertwined with other sectors — they support the tourism industry and are part of the \$22-billion cultural GDP.<sup>3</sup> As we shift from industrial economies built on manufacturing and consumerism to knowledge-based economies built on knowledge, skills and innovation, museums can play a pivotal role.

Museums are also important to healthy communities; they are vital to a sense of place, to well-being and to quality of life. They provide gathering places, where people can reflect, socialize, and be entertained. Many museums are also hubs, where visitors can learn,

<sup>1</sup> OMA records indicate approximately 670 museums in Ontario; the Department of Canadian Heritage notes 667 for its *Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2011*

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Heritage, *Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2011*  
<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, *Culture Satellite Account: Economic importance of culture and sport across Canada culture*, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/13-604-m/2015079/eco-eng.htm>

create, engage and debate. Most of Ontario’s museums maintain collections, which speak to our collective identity and aspirations, and are a source of community pride.

In developing this vision and action plan, The Looking Ahead Task Force considered the health of Ontario’s museums and the current status of the museum sector. The Task Force considered institutions of varying sizes and disciplines, those with or without collections, and in some cases, those without physical locations.

With all this diversity, Ontario’s museums are ideally suited to generate the social and economic impacts needed for a dynamic and prosperous Ontario. But this same diversity can act as a challenge itself. The result can be an institutional-level focus, in some cases, on a Darwinian struggle for survival.

**Embracing Change**

Museums have a long history as stewards of collections that represent our diverse culture and heritage. They have a strong tradition as educational, recreational and leisure organizations. Over the last 40 years, Ontario has also seen much effort and expense invested in museums as providers of place-based experiences. Recently this has translated into a boom in museum design and architecture, from large-scale renovations to the building of impressive new facilities.

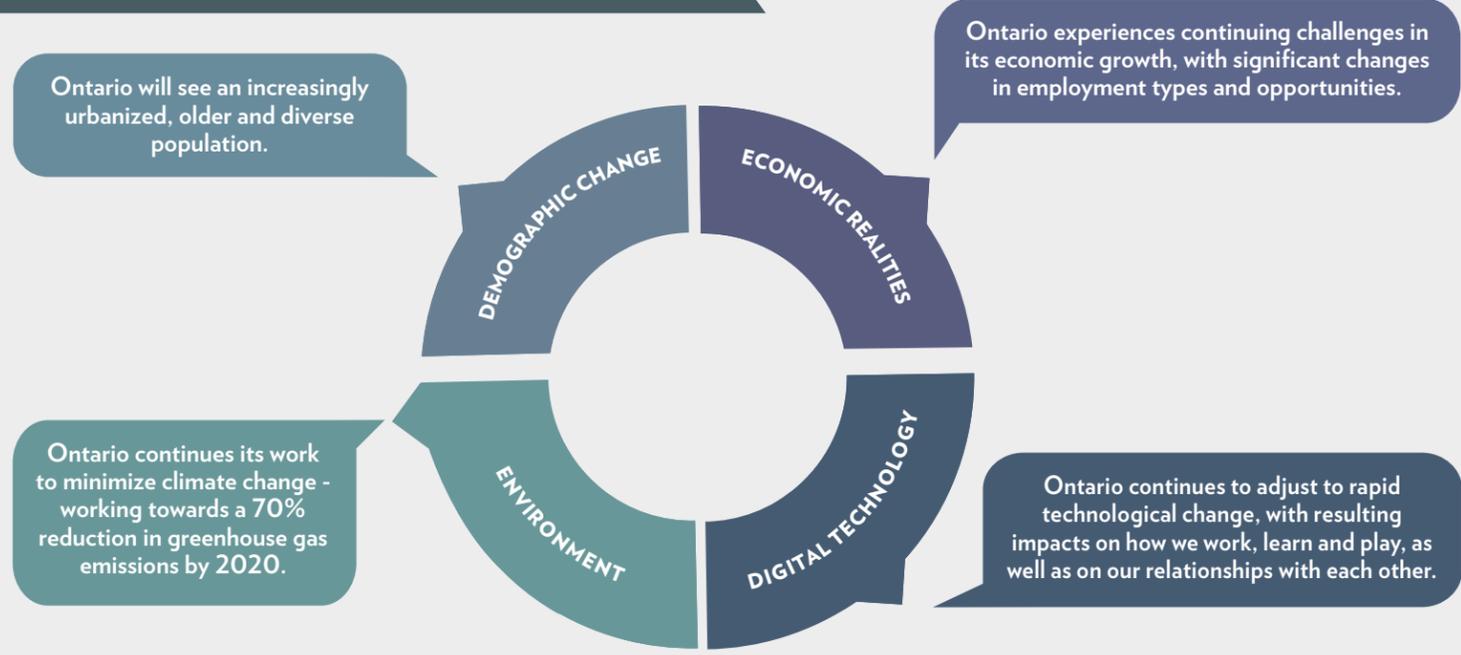
We’re approaching an important period in this history. In 2017, Ontarians and Canadians will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the province and the nation. Ontario’s museums will play a large role in the celebrations, based on our traditional strengths as institutions with collections that reflect history, heritage and culture.

This imminent milestone challenges us to consider where our nation, province and museums are heading — to cast our gaze toward the vast horizon of the coming decades, and more so, to focus on the desired evolution of Ontario’s museums in 2025.

During this period, Ontario will see increased urbanization and demographic shifts. The province can expect continuing technological, environmental and political changes. The Task Force believes that Ontario’s museums can play a fundamental role in preparing for, and responding to, these changes. To do so — and to position museums for long-term success in these uncertain and volatile times — a rethink is needed. Strategic forward planning is required.

While our collections and our buildings are important foundations for museum work — and while they distinguish us as public institutions — in and of themselves, they cannot be the desired outcomes. This is not new thinking. During the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, museums have invested considerable attention and resources on the public experience and

**ISSUES & TRENDS AFFECTING MUSEUMS**



on museums' educational role. In 1992, the American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums) released *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*. The report called for "fundamental change in how museums view their service to society" and a "new definition of museums as institutions of public service and education."<sup>4</sup> The report was embraced by the Canadian museum sector.

Twenty-plus years on, **Ontario's Museums 2025** supports the underlying principles of the AAM's report. Yet it questions whether museums have, indeed, become integral to society — a stated goal of the AAM report — and if not, then **Ontario's Museums 2025** asks why not? More importantly, it asks what can be done so that Ontario's museums can be integral now and in the near future.

Many museums are already valuable anchors for their communities, providing a sense of place, belonging and continuity. By caring for and interpreting their collections, museums preserve memories, celebrate community, and are focal points for civic pride. Seen as reliable and trusted sources of information by the public, museums are valued for the leisure and learning experiences they provide. They also provide safe community spaces.

Valued as places of learning, museums are also places for new and ongoing research. While museum staff members are often communicators, facilitators and teachers helping their visitors connect to information and ideas, staff members are also researchers and innovators, advancing numerous fields and disciplines, often by use of museum collections. Pertinent examples include current research at the Royal Ontario Museum on the blue whale, as well as the McMaster Museum of Art's ongoing project with healthcare workers to help recognize physical and emotional maltreatment of children. These examples help portray Ontario's museums, not only as public institutions in which people can learn, play, shop and gather, but as facilities that undertake research, foster innovation, and advance knowledge.

So what needs to change? The power of museums lies in the relationships between our collections, our spaces, and people — museum staff, stakeholders, and members of the public. The Task Force believes that future success lies in fully embracing the reciprocal nature of these relationships.

Museums in 2025 must be more than responsive. They should proactively engage with the public and stakeholders to realize fully their potential value to their communities and to society. They need to facilitate active participation by community members and stakeholders in strategic planning and all areas of museum work. They themselves need to be active and beneficial public institutions in their communities.

Ontario's museums also need to work collaboratively to determine, realize and measure their collective impact as a sector. Ontario's museums will benefit from increased public awareness that will result from a proactive, collaborative and sector-level approach.



Blue whale carcass on rocks at the shoreline, Woody Point, Newfoundland, May 2014 - Courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, © , photo by Jacqueline C. Waters

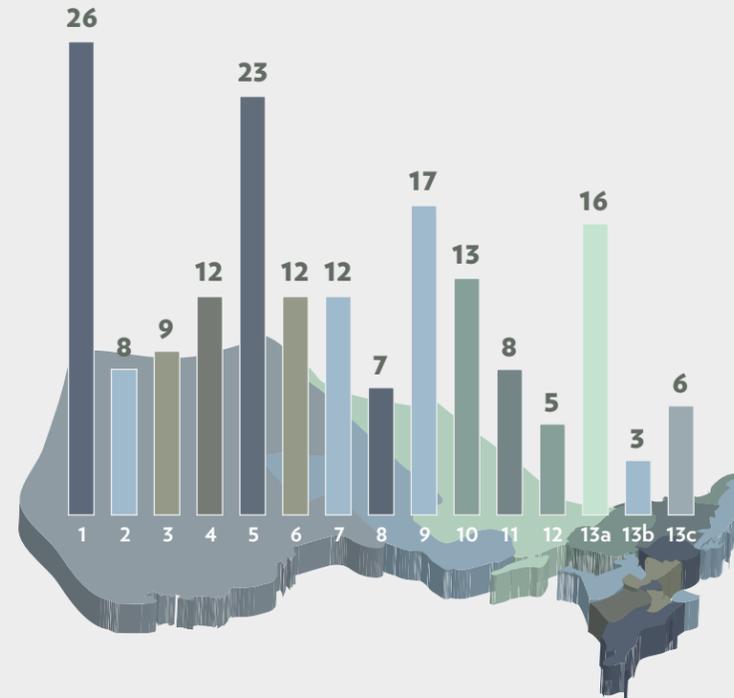
### ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM (TORONTO), BLUE WHALE RESEARCH

In 2014, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) sent a team to Newfoundland to recover, inspect and conduct detailed research on two blue whales that died and washed ashore at Rocky Harbour and Trout River. This situation presented a rare opportunity to study an endangered marine species. The ROM responded to the challenge, ensuring the world would have research for generations to come. The ROM has committed to prepare the whale bones for display — upon completion, one skeleton will remain at the ROM and the other will return to Newfoundland for display in the new science building at Memorial University. The ROM has also committed to sequencing the complete genome of the blue whale — furthering essential research on what is considered the largest animal in the world.

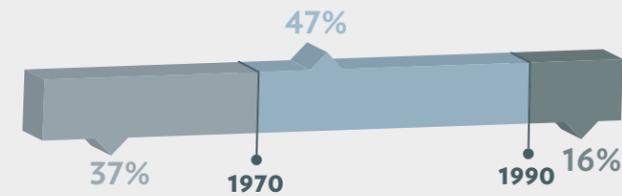
## OF THE 177 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

### TOURISM REGIONS

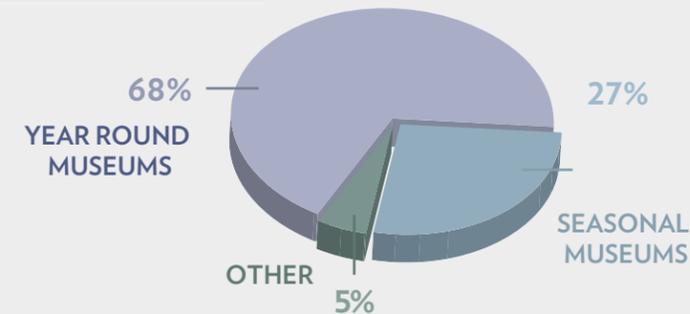
- 1: Southwestern Ontario
- 2: Niagara, Canada
- 3: Hamilton, Halton, and Brant
- 4: Huron, Perth, Waterloo, and Wellington
- 5: Greater Toronto Area
- 6: York, Durham, and The Hills of Headwaters
- 7: Bruce Peninsula, Southern Georgian Bay, and Lake Simcoe
- 8: Kawarthas and Northumberland
- 9: Southeastern Ontario
- 10: Ottawa and Countryside
- 11: Haliburton Highlands to the Ottawa Valley
- 12: Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka, and Parry Sound
- 13a: Northeastern Ontario
- 13b: Sault Ste. Marie - Algoma
- 13c: Northwestern Ontario



### YEAR ESTABLISHED



### OPERATING PERIOD



### OPERATING EXPENSE LEVEL



### Data Charts & Graphics

Unless otherwise noted, the data highlighted in the charts and graphs seen throughout this paper comes from a preliminary analysis of an institutional survey completed by 177 museums during late 2014 and 2015. The data

was used to identify issues and trends. These numbers informed the development of the vision and action plan. *Please note: The data presented in this paper is not meant to reflect a complete statistical profile of Ontario's museums.*



Participants in One Billion Rising V-Day Event on the steps of the Gardiner Museum, 2013 - Courtesy of the Gardiner Museum

“ [Museums] become institutions that are ubiquitous — that can reach elsewhere, that are pervasive in people’s experiences, not just through a museum’s physical space, but through its activities as well. ”

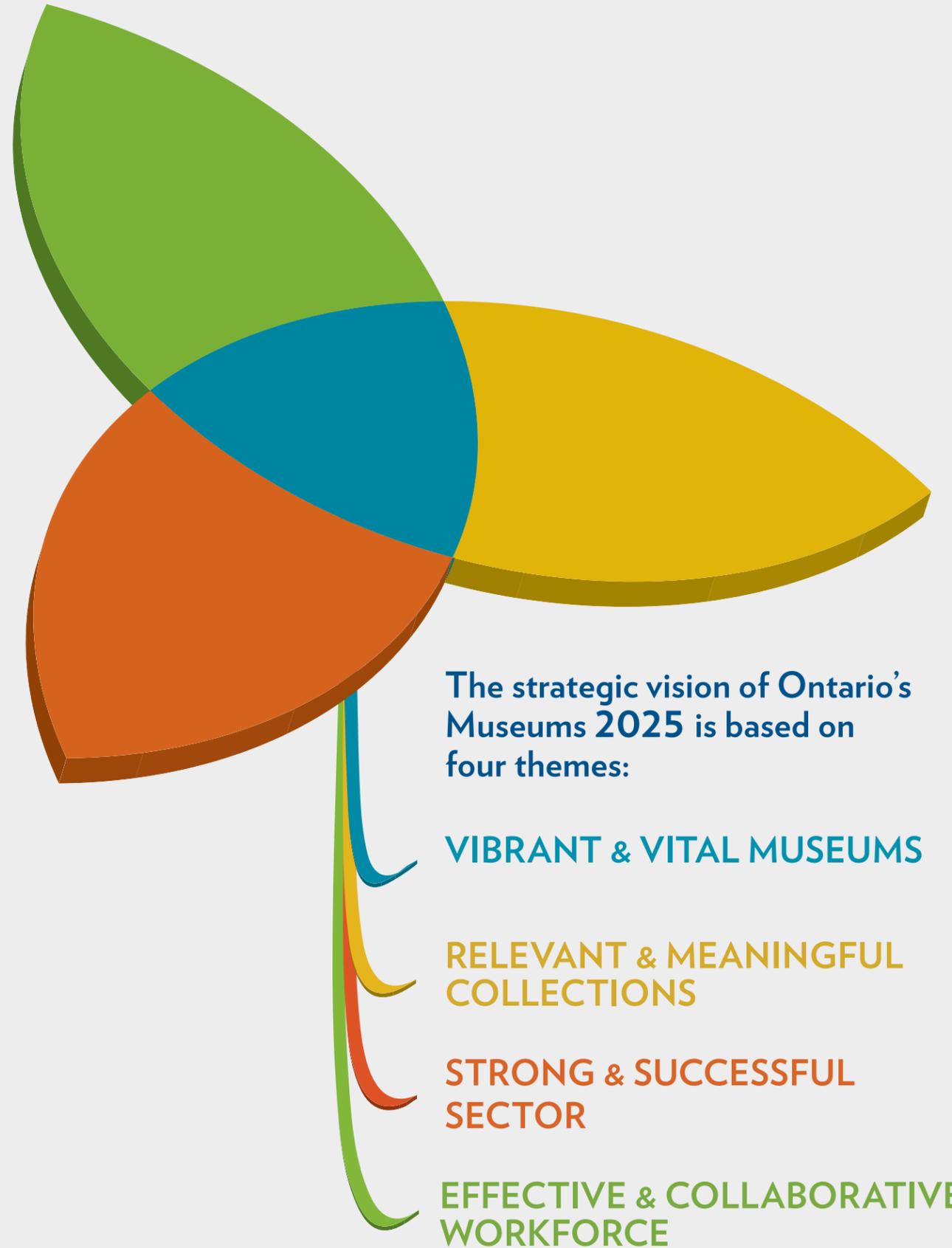
— Interviewee

In developing a draft strategic vision for museums, the Looking Ahead Task Force considered why museums exist and why they matter. In grappling with answers, key aspects of a museum’s current role were considered and reimagined.

The museum’s public service is realized through the provision of experiences. These experiences are based on knowledge derived from tangible and intangible collections, and are delivered through exhibitions and various types of programming. **Ontario’s Museums 2025** argues for greater quality and depth of engagement with people — our visitors, stakeholders and communities — when considering the types of experiences provided.

Given financial realities and sustainability issues, **Ontario’s Museums 2025** also asks museums to consider new organizational models that provide for greater public impact. These models should explore new beneficial relationships with various parties, including other collecting institutions (libraries and archives), other cultural organizations, governments, the tourism industry, and other sectors such as health and education. These partnerships should take full advantage of opportunities provided by emerging digital technologies.

**Ontario’s Museums 2025** recognizes that each museum is unique, defined by its community, collections, buildings, and funding model. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work. That said, the Task Force believes that the future strength of this sector will depend on a clear value position — unity based on deeply shared values and collaboration — and the ability to communicate impacts to the public in a meaningful way.



“A successful museum is one that engages visitors. If you have no one coming to a museum, what’s the point of its existence? It’s possible to have a museum with very few collections, but through its use of displays, educational programs, online interaction and so on, it might have an impact that’s significantly larger than a museum that has a much larger number of collections.”

— Interviewee

Looking ahead to 2025, Ontario museums play a central role in our overall quality of life and individual sense of well-being. Museums help create sustainable and vibrant communities, working in partnership with other cultural organizations, diverse community groups, the education sector, the health sector, and other private and public groups.

As social agents, museums strengthen communities. They do so by bringing people together to engage in conversation, build empathy and shared understanding. In 2025, Ontario’s museums build social cohesion and foster a sense of inclusion and belonging. They are embedded in their communities, active in initiatives and events. Museums help define local distinctiveness.

In 2025, museum spaces are accessible and inclusive. In this digitized age, museums provide layered, multi-level, physical interactions — with other people and with real objects. Museum space is also flexible and dynamic, allowing for a wider range of public activities and services, functioning as a community hub.

In 2025, Ontario’s museums continue to stimulate thought, reflection and learning. They enable people to access and use information, and to exchange and create content. However, there is less emphasis on permanent galleries or collections held in perpetuity. Instead, museums focus on providing meaningful experiences. As a result, they have embraced research-based approaches and established an outcome-based evaluation model to develop and measure the effectiveness of their work. Museums also provide opportunities for meaningful participation in museum work.

## Vision 2025:

Museums are relevant to contemporary society in Ontario. They engage their communities, stakeholders, and the public in developing and delivering their work. Museums provide welcoming spaces for rich layered experiences and opportunities for lifelong learning.

### Key Principles:

- Social Contribution & Beneficial Social Change**  
 Museums of 2025 are socially engaged. They play a part in meeting society’s needs. They bring people together to consider and solve problems. They address complex and sensitive issues, and they facilitate debate and understanding. Museums empower people, fostering active and informed citizenship.
- Access & Participation**  
 In 2025, Museums remain important places for people to gather, to engage with others, for leisure and learning, whether as visitors, event participants, members or volunteers. Museums also engage with individuals and communities in identifying needs, and in delivering services that are important and meaningful. Museums foster a sense of identity, place and community. Museums facilitate access and participation by people of different backgrounds, different ages, and different income levels.
- Education & Lifelong Learning**  
 Museums are considered important educational institutions in 2025. They provide innovative spaces and learning opportunities for skills and knowledge development to people of all ages. Partnering with the education sector, they are a major provider of formal learning opportunities and education services for elementary- and secondary-school students.

### Outcomes:

- Better contribute to the well-being and health of our communities.**  
 Museums of 2025 are embedded in their communities. They understand the needs and issues of the environments in which they operate, and they position their work to be relevant and of public benefit. Museums can help communities process complex issues and vast amounts of information.

- Enhance opportunities for Ontarians, stakeholders and visitors to participate in, and contribute to, the museum experience.**  
 Museums value the important role of their communities, the public, and their stakeholders in developing and delivering their work. In 2025, they fully explore the benefits of co-creation and co-production. Museums use digital technology and social media to communicate effectively, and to extend their impacts.

- Provide dynamic learning opportunities and experiences.**  
 Exhibitions, public programs and other museum offerings are timely and engaging. In 2025, these offerings comprise a quality experience for visitors and users. These experiences are a valuable part of Ontario’s lifelong learning system.

- Provide accessible and inspiring spaces for our communities, the public and visitors.**  
 In 2025, museums are public spaces that are broadly accessible, both onsite and online. Museums are used by different groups with differing needs. Facilities are welcoming spaces for gathering, reflection and discussion. Museums are landmarks in their communities, important anchors for local identity.

- Ensure museum work is relevant to our changing and demographically diverse population.**  
 Museums understand the demographics of their communities in 2025. Museums consider people of different backgrounds, different ages, and different income levels within their communities, and commit to ongoing consultation with, and participation of, these groups in developing and delivering museum work.

### Related Actions:

- See suggested actions 1-5, 16, 21-22, 24-27

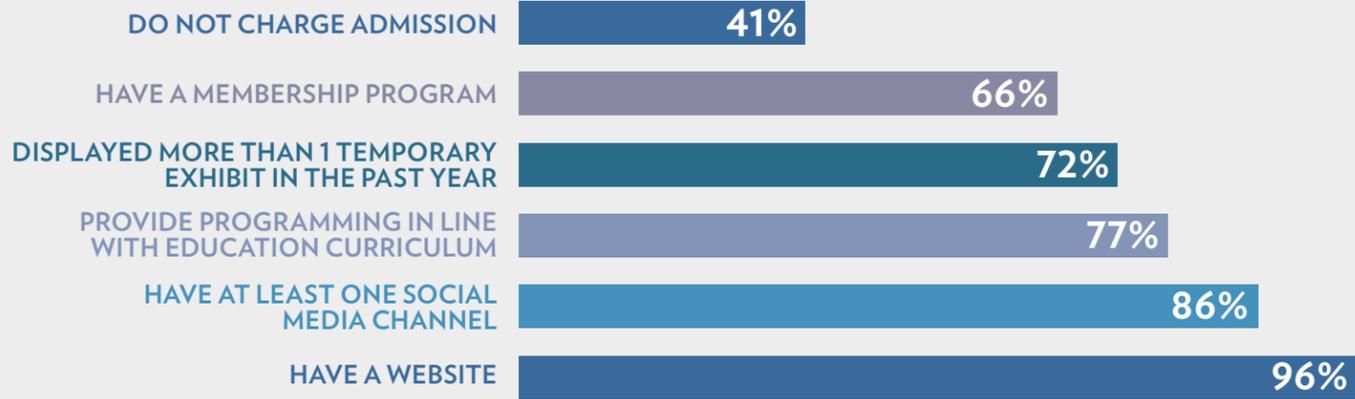


Musicians perform during *Sikh Heritage Month* celebrations, April 2015 - Courtesy of the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives

## THE PEEL ART GALLERY, MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES (BRAMPTON), *Sikh Heritage Month*

In April 2015, the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives (PAMA) partnered for the first time with the Sikh Community to commemorate *Sikh Heritage Month*. The month-long event featured seven exhibits on different aspects of Sikh and Sikh-Canadian heritage and culture. It included major opening and closing events, and through April there were more than 25 different community-led workshops, lectures, performances and one-day exhibits. Partners included the Sikh Heritage Museum of Canada, sikhmuseum.com, as well as the Sikh Foundation of Canada. PAMA considers this a ‘pilot project’ for community collaboration on events; it is building new partnerships across the diverse cultural communities of the Region of Peel.

## OF THE 177 SURVEY RESPONDENTS



## ADMISSION PRICES TOTAL = 104 MUSEUMS

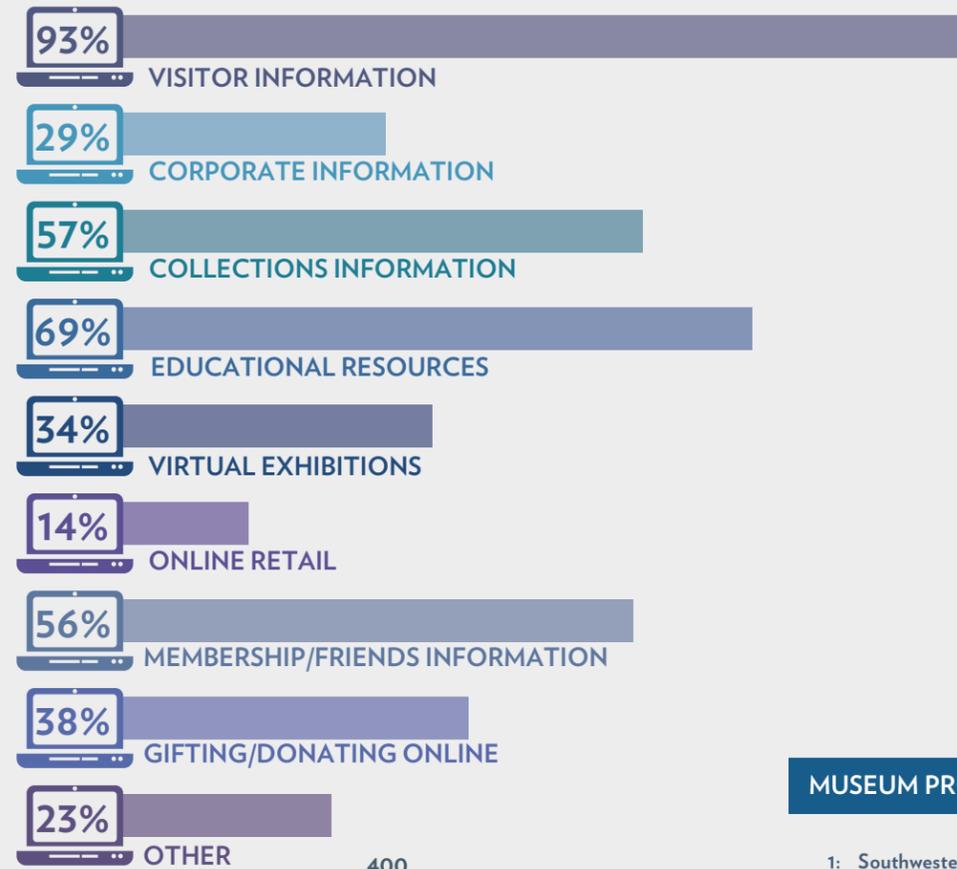


5,661,940

TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS

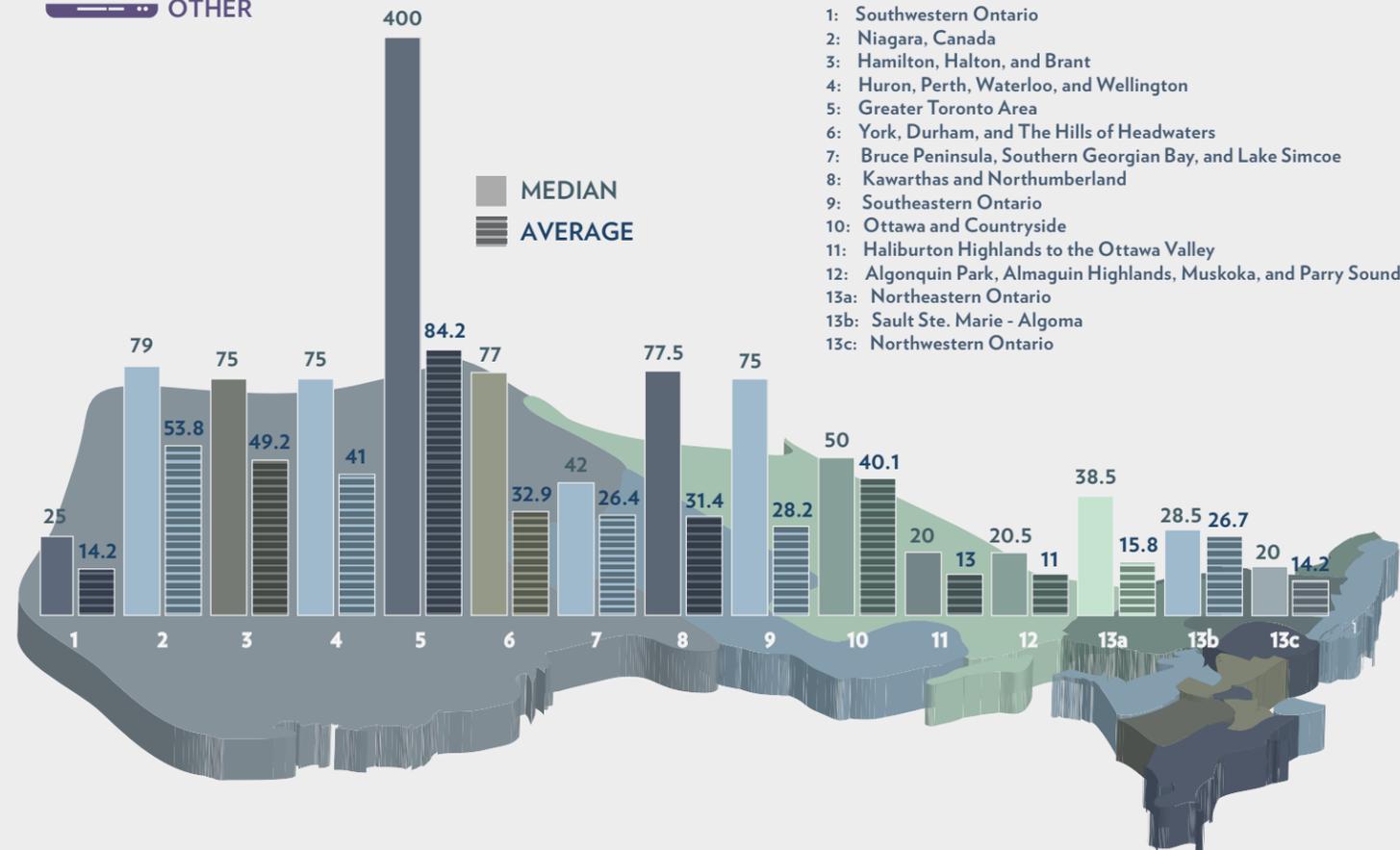
## CONTENT TYPE ON MUSEUM WEBSITES

TOTAL = 104 MUSEUMS

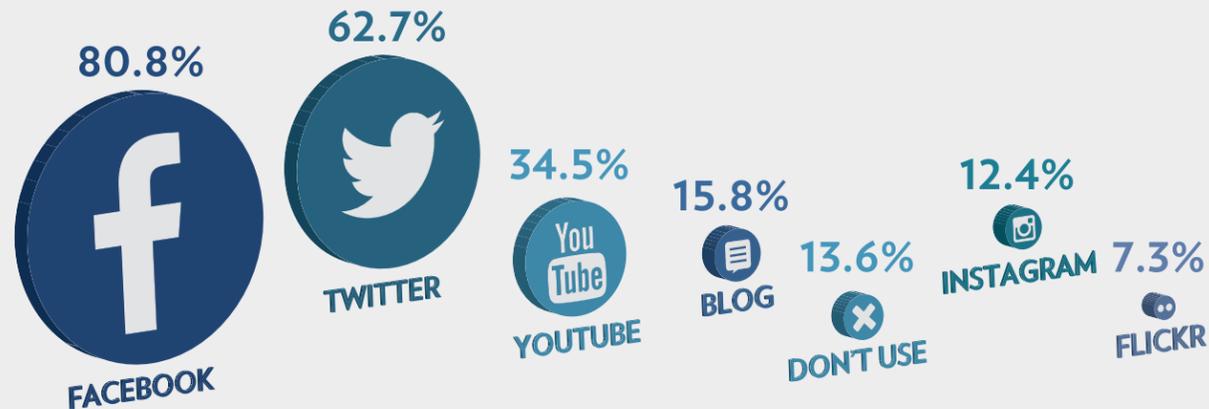


## MUSEUM PROGRAMS BY REGION

- 1: Southwestern Ontario
- 2: Niagara, Canada
- 3: Hamilton, Halton, and Brant
- 4: Huron, Perth, Waterloo, and Wellington
- 5: Greater Toronto Area
- 6: York, Durham, and The Hills of Headwaters
- 7: Bruce Peninsula, Southern Georgian Bay, and Lake Simcoe
- 8: Kawarthas and Northumberland
- 9: Southeastern Ontario
- 10: Ottawa and Countryside
- 11: Haliburton Highlands to the Ottawa Valley
- 12: Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka, and Parry Sound
- 13a: Northeastern Ontario
- 13b: Sault Ste. Marie - Algoma
- 13c: Northwestern Ontario



## MUSEUM USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA





Visitors at the exhibit opening for *Bakaan naki'ii ngii-izhi-gakinoo'amaagoomin: We Were Taught Differently*, September 2008 - Courtesy of the Lake of the Woods Museum

### LAKE OF THE WOODS MUSEUM (KENORA), BAKAAN NAKI'II NGII-IZHI-GAKINOO'AMAAGOOMIN: WE WERE TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY

*Bakaan naki'ii ngii-izhi-gakinoo'amaagoomin: We Were Taught Differently* is an exhibit exploring the history and lingering legacy of the Indian Residential School system, with a particular focus on Kenora's two residential schools. It was researched and put together over the course of 2007-2008 by an exhibit committee consisting of staff and board members from the Lake of the Woods Museum, residential school survivors, and children of survivors. Programs were produced and delivered in partnership with Grand Council Treaty #3 Indian Residential School Health Support Program and Manidoo Baawaatig (Seven Generations). Since its display at the Lake of the Woods Museum, the exhibit has traveled to other communities within Ontario.

This exhibit, which began touring in 2014, highlights the ability museums have to present thought-provoking, relevant issues to museum visitors. Through the use of images, artifacts and factual information, the museum created an exhibit that challenges visitors' moral responsibilities, opens dialogue, and encourages active participation within the community. The exhibit is one of the only residential school exhibits in Canada. It makes artifacts and educational programming available to help spark conversation around this era of Canadian history.

“I think the public needs to be given greater access to these resources. I have no objection whatsoever to people handling original items, handling original artifacts. Clearly, there is an element of judgment that comes into play. I mean, you know, if it's the Mona Lisa, people are not going to be putting their hands all over it! But most of our stuff, by-and-large, doesn't fall into that category ... There is no substitute with respect to the sense of wonder that can be created, and the link that can be established for someone in a very meaningful way. Saying: 'Here's a reproduction of a plate from 1850,' is completely different than saying, 'Here's a real plate from 1850 that generations of people have handled and used.’”

— Interviewee

“Sharing skills, tools and even physical assets — why keep something in storage if someone else can use it?”

— Sector Scan Participant

Looking ahead to 2025, museum collections and our heritage buildings continue to be central — not defining — assets. Collections are used to inform discussions and promote public understanding of contemporary issues and environmental sustainability.

As public stewards, museums provide professional standards of care for the collections, both tangible and intangible, that they hold in public trust. These collections belong to the public, and as such, Ontario's museums work together to ensure thorough knowledge of the range and significance of collections held by individual institutions throughout the province. They also engage in discussions on a coordinated approach to collecting, which addresses overlaps, duplication and gaps through both the acquisition and deaccession processes.

Ontario's museums in 2025 consider new models for the care, development and use of the collections. Considerations may include limited resources, co-ownership models and economies of scale.

At an institutional level, Ontario's museums in 2025 have moved away from broad generic collections to be held in perpetuity. Instead, institutional collections reflect diverse and local cultural experiences and interests. Institutional collection policies and practices emphasize strategic collecting; they explore creative ways to increase public access to and use of collections.

## Vision 2025:

Museums care for and develop collections for the public benefit. Museums enhance both public access and public interpretation of collections to enable people to make meaning of their place in society.

## Key Principles:

- **Care & Access to Collections**  
Museums consider the public benefit in the strategic development of collections and standards of care. In 2025, museums allow greater public access and use of collections.

## Outcomes:

1. **Care for collections in a coordinated way.**  
Museums in 2025 are good stewards of collections and buildings that are held in public trust. Museums explore opportunities to optimize resources to provide as high a standard of collection care as possible.
2. **Explore new models for developing tangible and intangible collections.**  
Museums will collect based on sustainable and strategic models. Collections in 2025 reflect the diversity of people's experiences and expressions. Digital technology is used to inform the collecting process, including the identification of gaps and duplication.
3. **Enhance public access to collections.**  
In 2025, museums provide the public with information on the range and significance of collections held by individual institutions throughout the province. Museums are creative in facilitating public access and use of collections.

## Related Actions:

- See suggested actions 6, 12-13, 17-18

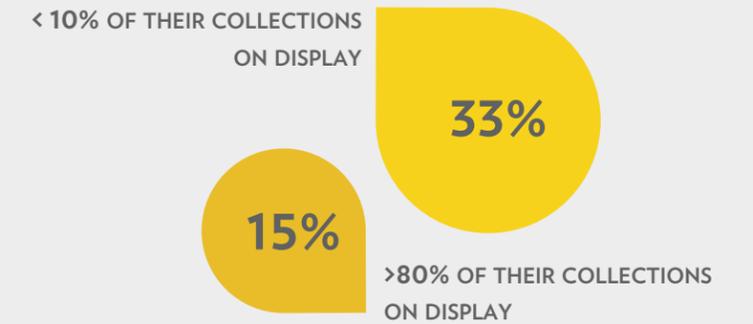


Engaging with the collections, visitors during the Stick it to the TOM event, May 2014 - Courtesy of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery

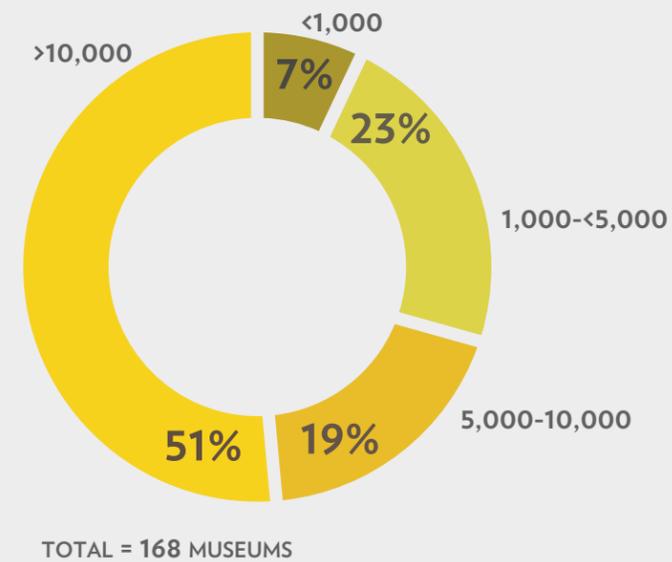
**TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY (OWEN SOUND), STICK IT TO THE TOM**

During the Stick it to the TOM event in 2014, the Tom Thomson Art Gallery offered visitors the opportunity to slow down, reflect and interact with artwork and museum collections. Gallery visitors were encouraged to describe their responses to the work in writing, then post their responses so that others could learn what moved, inspired, challenged and provoked them. A digital platform was provided for those who could not visit the gallery in person. Images from the collection were posted on Facebook. Virtual visitors participated during Stick it to the TOM by posting their responses to the images on social media — a feature that provided an enhanced interaction with the exhibit.

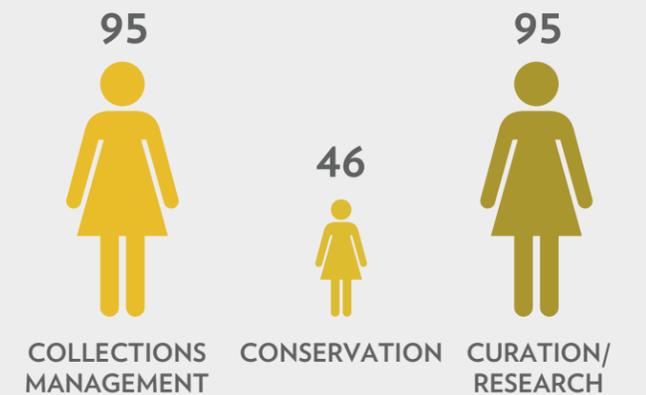
**OF THE 177 SURVEY RESPONDENTS**



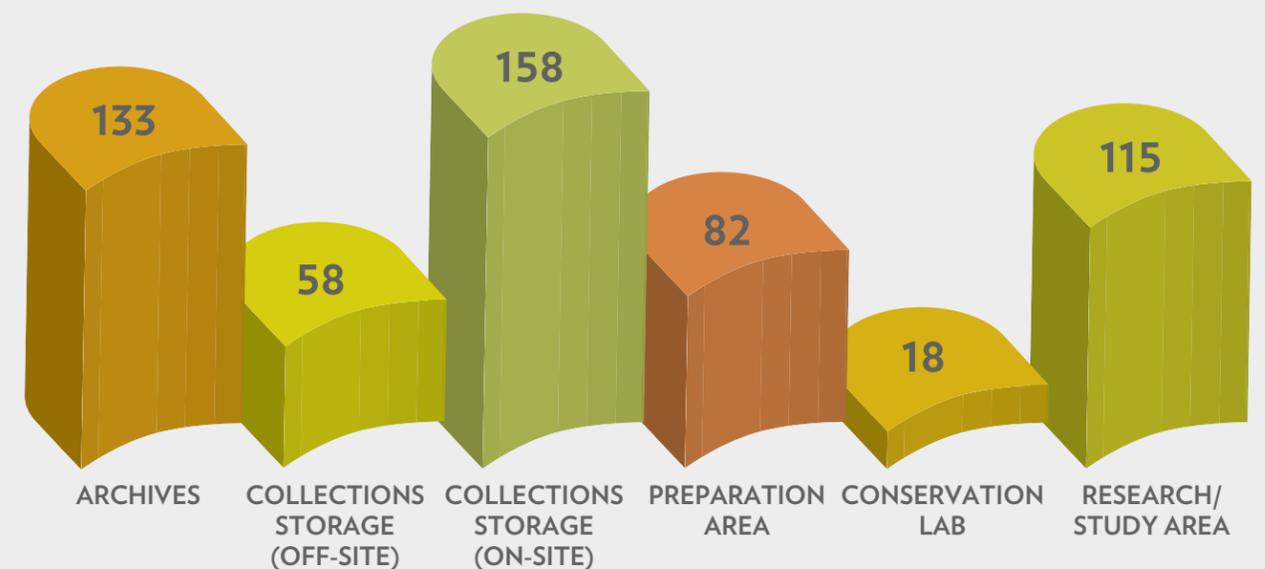
**NUMBER OF OBJECTS IN COLLECTIONS**



**DEDICATED STAFF MEMBER FOR COLLECTIONS**



**DEDICATED SPACES FOR COLLECTIONS**



“Lack of funds is the key issue. No museum successfully operates on gate receipts alone – there has to be significant buy-in and support from all levels of government. A successful business and financial model (budget) must allow for sustainability, accrual for future requirements, endowment for future operations, (and there needs to be) sufficient funding for staffing – being aware of the limitations of reliance on volunteers. The development of greater private/public partnerships can potentially develop greater resources for capital campaigns or ongoing support ... Funding sources such as CMOG, CSC, MAP etc. may need to increase the degree of inclusivity, (as well as) the amount of funds available to the sector.”

– Sector Scan Participant

Looking ahead to 2025, Ontario’s museums have become important contributors to an innovative, knowledge-based economy. Working with partners within the cultural sector, those in government and other relevant sectors and industries, Ontario’s museums help develop the skills and attributes needed for economic growth and for individual success. As place-based experiences, Ontario’s museums are important determinants in cultural tourism. As knowledge-based institutions that gather and facilitate access to information, they foster collaboration and innovation. As part of the cultural sector, Ontario’s museums in 2025 are among the main players in community-based cultural planning and development; they facilitate community revitalization and help create dynamic communities of choice.

In 2025, museums have considered new business models, and pursued innovative approaches to increase revenue generation. Museums have worked with the private sector to develop products, resources and audiences, leading to strengthened donations and investment opportunities. Ontario’s museums in 2025 benefit from strong relationships and partnerships with other organizations. These relationships are key to sustained relevance. Furthermore, museum operations are robust and nimble; resources are available to respond to changing needs and interests. In 2025, museums operate in a sustainable manner, and develop green business practices and eco-friendly facility management.

**Vision 2025:**

Ontario’s museums contribute to growing our local, provincial and national economies. They collaborate and partner within the museum and culture sector, and with other sectors. Museums operate with robust and relevant funding models based on the support of government, other not-for-profits, and private sector partners. They manage their operations, buildings and collections in a sustainable and effective manner.

**Key Principles:**

- **Public Accountability**  
In 2025, museums demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of museum work to funders, stakeholders and the public. They develop an ongoing and transparent evaluation/assessment process. Museums work in partnership. They share responsibility and resources with partners.
- **Economic Development**  
Museums help drive and support the development of an innovative, knowledge-based economy in 2025. They have an expanded role in cultural tourism. They help foster skill development based on creativity and innovation.
- **New & Innovative Operating Models**  
Museums work together in 2025 to explore new operating models and new revenue generation strategies.

**Outcomes:**

1. **Better contribute to community building through a knowledge-based economy, cultural tourism, and community regeneration.**  
In 2025, museums are a key driver of a new knowledge-based economy, and a key determinant of cultural tourism. Museums not only provide access to and facilitate information sharing, they are innovators, active in new research and the creation of knowledge. Museums can help a community distinguish itself, providing a strong sense of local identity, and creating an engaged vibrant community where people want to live, work and play.
2. **Develop new funding models, working with all levels of government and partners, so**

that museums can effectively manage their operations and provide relevant services for their communities.

In 2025, museums operate with a relevant base of local and provincial government funding, recognizing their contribution to Ontario’s social and economic well-being. Government also considers the museum’s public trust role with respect to appropriate funding support for ongoing asset management and collections care. Project funding is developed in consultation with the museum sector, so that it reflects funder priorities, as well as the progression of museum mandates and missions. Using this solid core of government funding as leverage, museums have solid support from private sector and not-for-profit funders.

3. **Promote Ontario’s museums, creating a strong awareness of the role of museums and their contributions to Ontario’s communities.**  
Museums work together in 2025 to build public

awareness and support for museums. Museums are seen as a valuable and necessary resource by funders and by the general public – both users and non-users. The public supports public funding of museums, and is aware of museum work in their local communities.

4. **Build greater collaboration and increase partnerships within the museum sector, within the culture sector, and with other sectors.**

Museums work together in 2025 to consider all opportunities for expanding their impact and operating more effectively. Museums pursue partnerships with other relevant groups to deliver their work. Museums are also sought out and valued as partners by the tourism, education and health sectors.

**Related Actions:**

➤ See suggested actions 7-11, 14-16, 29

**EXPENSES & REVENUE**

**\$758,090,077**

TOTAL EXPENSES



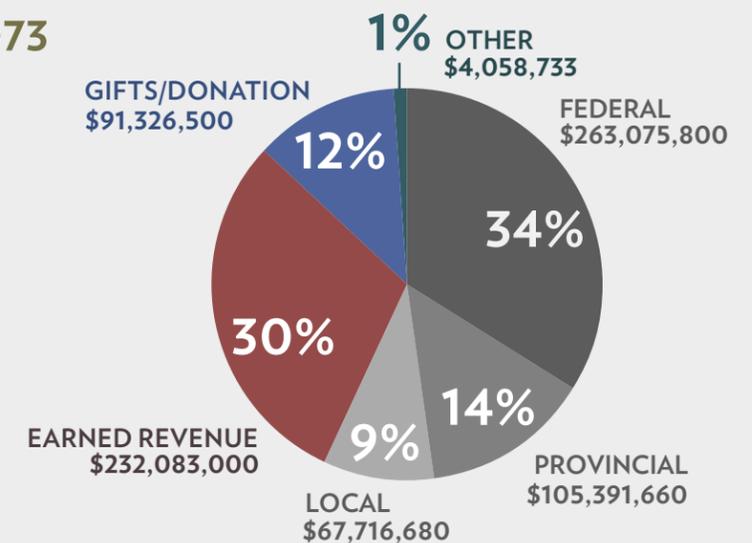
TOTAL REVENUE

**\$763,652,073**

Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2011

NOTE: These results would include federal grants to federal agencies located in Ontario, including the National Gallery (\$51,394,000\*), the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology (\$31,718,000\*), and Library and Archives Canada (\$111,866,000)\*. Provincial grants would include funds provided to such agencies as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Ontario Science Centre, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Royal Ontario Museum, and Science North.  
\*Numbers are from the 2011 annual reports of the organizations noted.

**REVENUE SOURCES**





McMaster University Family Medicine Residents learning clinical skills at McMaster Museum of Art, 2011 - Courtesy of the McMaster Museum of Art

### McMASTER MUSEUM OF ART (HAMILTON), ENGAGING AND EDUCATING IN CHILD MALTREATMENT

With novel and strategic partnerships, museums are redefining their contribution to community well-being. Beginning in 2011, with a grant from the Ontario Centre of Excellence in Child and Youth Mental Health, McMaster Museum of Art worked with Dr. Christine Wekerle, a Pediatrics researcher, to develop the program, *Engaging and Educating in Child Maltreatment*. This research-based visual literacy course sought to improve observation, description, communication, empathy and critical thinking skills. Partnering with McMaster Children's Hospital's Child Advocacy and Assessment Program, this course provides an enrichment experience for undergraduate students in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The McMaster Museum of Art's vision of community engagement, professional resilience, and social action is forging models that connect clinical practice, societal issues, and research excellence through an innovative partnership.

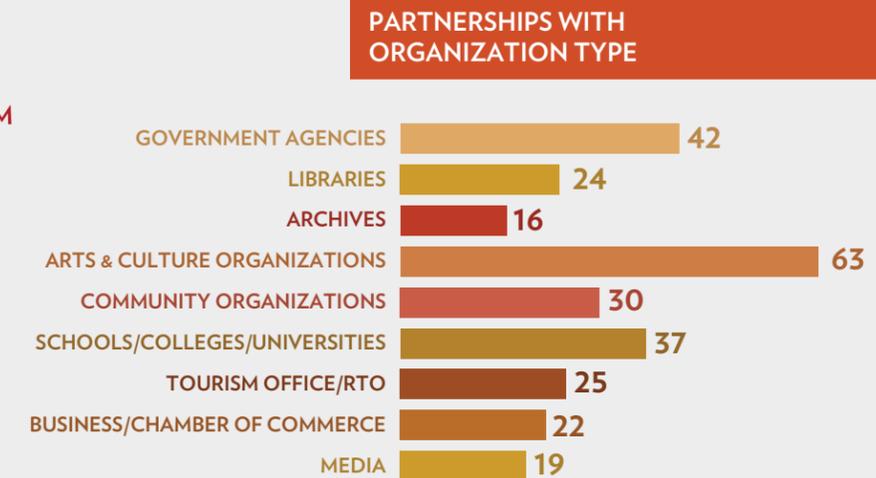


Webpage for the Ottawa Museums & Archives Online Collections - Ottawa Museums & Archives Collections (ottawa.minisisinc.com)

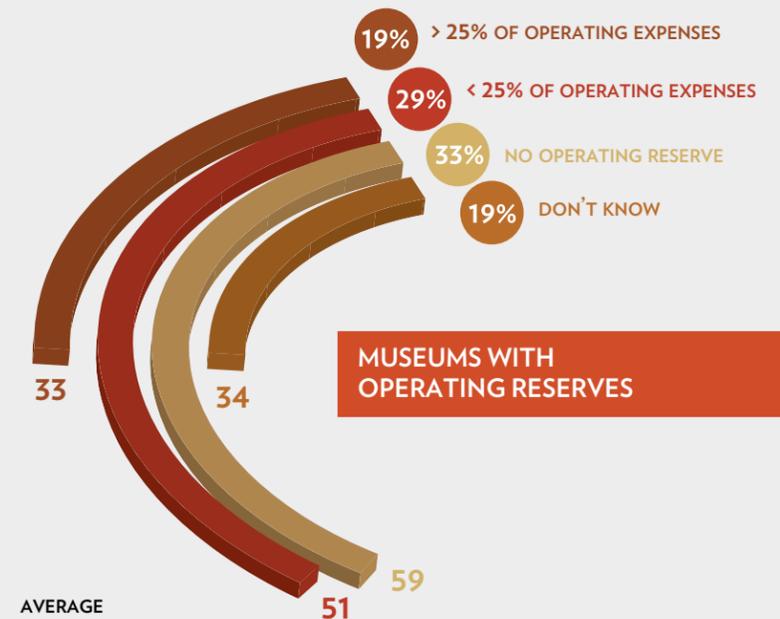
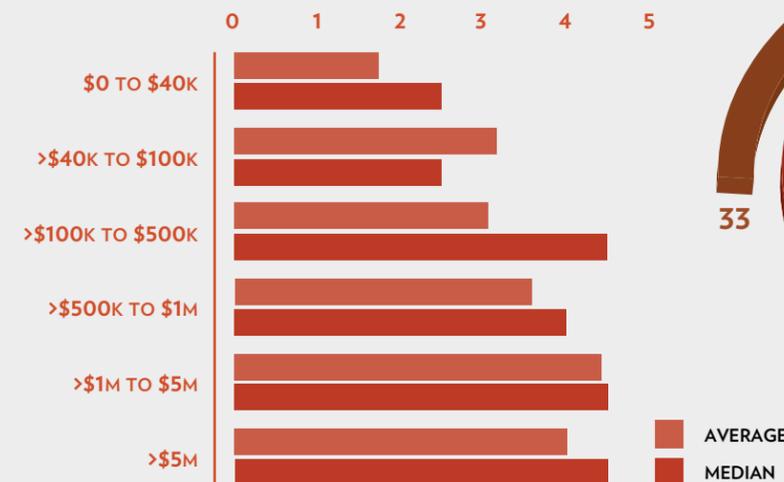
### OTTAWA MUSEUM NETWORK (OTTAWA), COLLABORATION, PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORKING

Committed to raising awareness of the 11 community museums in Ottawa, the Ottawa Museum Network (OMN) works to engage Ottawa's communities in the area's rich heritage. As a network, the OMN has successfully launched Ottawa Museums & Archives Online Collections. This online portal offers full access to tens of thousands of records from eight of Ottawa's museums. The network has thrived due to collaboration on projects such as the Ottawa Museum Library Pass and the Connexion Card Program, as well as through enhancement of conservation standards among OMN museums. Many of these programs have contributed to an improved network marketing strategy, and have increased revenue growth for participating museums.

## OF THE 177 SURVEY RESPONDENTS



### PARTNERSHIPS ACCORDING TO OPERATING EXPENSES



### MUSEUMS WITH OPERATING RESERVES

Governing Authority	CMOG-FUNDED	NOT CMOG-FUNDED
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	3	1
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL	56	13
INDEPENDENT/ NON-PROFIT CORPORATION	25	52
OTHER GOVERNMENT	1	3
PROVINCIAL AGENCY	1	3
OTHER	3	11

### CMOG-FUNDED MUSEUMS BY GOVERNING AUTHORITY

CMOG-FUNDED (Red)  
NOT CMOG-FUNDED (Dark Red)

“ We’re experiencing aging leadership. There was a whole whack of us that started working in the salad days of the 1970s and early ‘80s when there was lots of money floating around. We’re the big bulge in the anaconda. We’re moving along — a lot of us are starting to leave the field now. I’m worried there hasn’t been enough backfilling. For the last 10 to 15 years it’s been very tough to make a long-term career in the museum field. I worry that there aren’t full-time, lifelong museum professionals waiting to step in. ”

— Interviewee

Looking ahead to 2025, museums have come under the leadership of a different generation — the youngest of the baby boomers have retired. A successful transition will have required thoughtful succession planning in the intervening years.

Some things have not changed. People working for museums remain passionate, engaged, creative and collaborative. In 2025, they are also recognized as highly trained professionals. Museum studies is understood and valued as a discipline, but as in the past, museum workers come from a variety of backgrounds. There is a meaningful connection between the museum sector and academia. Programs reflect the knowledge needed to be effective in the sector, and provide the ongoing skill development and necessary training. There is also a stronger relationship between the number of graduates of these highly competitive programs and the number of positions within the sector, both current vacancies as well as projections for growth.

In 2025, organizations operate with relevant staff contingents. As a result, staff workloads are balanced. Remuneration reflects the high levels of education and specificity of skills and knowledge needed to be an effective museum professional.

In 2025, museum staff understand they operate within a “cultural ecosystem” with important roles in the education and health sectors. Museums also have strong relationships with other community groups and non-profit organizations. They have developed relevant and strong relationships with the private sector and industries.

The sector operates within a culture that embraces professionalism, outcome-based evaluation and self-assessment. Programs and services are in place that foster innovation and leadership. Meaningful and rewarding opportunities are available for emerging museum professionals who demonstrate capacity, insight and leadership.

In 2025, volunteers continue to be critical to the museum workforce. However, the sector continues to work to address the changing nature of volunteerism, especially volunteer numbers and availability, as well as volunteer roles and responsibilities. This work considers new models for volunteer participation.

## Vision 2025:

Museums can demonstrate the impact of their work on Ontario’s economy, and its social and cultural vitality. They communicate their value to their communities and to Ontarians. Museum workers are recognized as highly skilled and dedicated professionals.

### Key Principles:

- **Increased Professionalization**  
Museum workers are committed professionals who work to advance their own skills and training, as well as the general appreciation and understanding of their profession.
- **New Volunteer Role**  
Museums of 2025 consider new models for volunteering, based on shifts in volunteering patterns and the aging demographic of volunteers.
- **Sector & Professional Cohesion**  
In addition to professional standards of conduct and work, museum workers collaborate in 2025 to advance sector interests and the profession.

### Outcomes:

1. **Develop and implement an ongoing research framework to facilitate museum work and to demonstrate the social and economic impact of Ontario’s museums.**  
Research is a key factor in capacity building for the sector. Based on timely research, individual museums of 2025 are more effective in addressing their own

economic and political environments. Working together, the museum sector uses research to create strategies to engage with its funders and promote itself to the public.

2. **Develop benchmarks and performance indicators for Ontario’s museum sector to foster excellence and relevance in museum work.**

Museums embrace a culture of assessment and evaluation in 2025. Results are used to foster transparency and public accountability, and to build ongoing public support for public funding of museums.

3. **Work towards effective human resource models that build leadership, foster innovation and support professional development.**

Museum workers of 2025 are recognized as highly trained and highly skilled workers. Museums work together to develop and foster leadership, as well as to provide meaningful and rewarding employment and volunteer opportunities.

4. **Consider new relationships among museums, the Ontario Museum Association, regional museum networks and museum studies programs.**

Museums strategically work together in 2025 to advance the sector, and pursue opportunities to foster appreciation for museum professionals.

### Related Actions:

- See suggested actions 19-20, 23, 28-31



RE-ORG participants organizing the collections storage of the Brant Museum, March 2014 - Ontario Museum Association

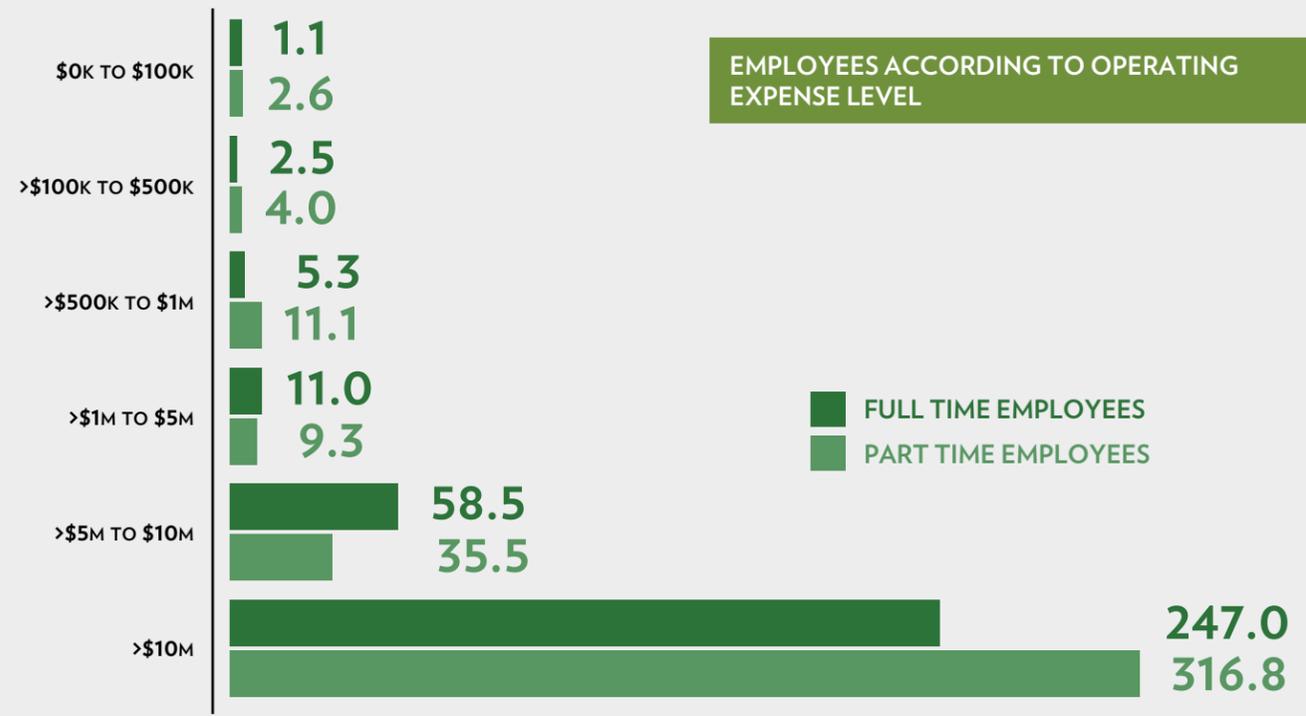
## CANADIAN CONSERVATION INSTITUTE & ONTARIO MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, RE-ORG

Working to identify key issues affecting access and collection conservation, the Canadian Conservation Institute and the Ontario Museum Association have launched RE-ORG across Ontario. Not only does this multi-level program address storage issues, it also works to inspire coming generations of museum leaders to consider storage reorganization. In the program’s pilot year, 12 participants from six museums across Ontario were challenged to transform existing spaces into organized storage areas. The initiative helps save museums time and money, and assists them in becoming environmentally responsible. In one case, international standards developed by UNESCO/ICCROM were implemented by the Brant Museum and Archives. In just three days, the museum successfully re-organized an archival storage area comprising 30,000 items.



Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions: 2011

OF THE 177 SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Thom Sokoloski (b. 1950), *Colour of the River Running Through Us*, 2015 - Courtesy of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, photograph by Thom Sokoloski

“(We) need to be able to define what success will look like – be it more people voting, healthier children, more beautiful streets. Then (we can) be committed to finding ways of evaluating that success. That’s not easy, and it’s relatively long term! But until we can move away from immediate bums-on-seats kinds of measures, we will never move forward.”

– Sector Scan Participant

“Outside of the national museums and provincial agency museums, the bulk of the finances for museum and historic site operation in Ontario comes from municipal governments – either as direct line departments, municipal service agencies, or grants. There is nothing particularly wrong with this... It is also true that most museums have done a good job recently in expanding and exploiting earned revenue sources... So that’s the context. Moving forward, (to develop a strong and successful financial model, we should consider) a Municipal or Heritage Act amendment which requires municipalities to operate or support a museum.”

– Sector Scan Participant

**Ontario's Museums 2025** presents an aspirational vision for Ontario's museum sector. This vision reflects current thinking on the potential of museums in western societies, and considers future roles.

To achieve the vision, a framework is proposed that's comprised of a hierarchy of themes, outcomes and actions. To be effective, the Looking Ahead Task Force and the Ontario Museum Association (OMA), along with Ontario's museums and governments, will need to work together in the plan's adoption and implementation. However, the Looking Ahead Task Force and OMA also acknowledge that much of this sector is currently stretched thin, making do with limited resources.

As a result, the Looking Ahead Task Force and the OMA have carefully considered approaches to realizing the vision. The framework and its contents, known collectively as The Action Plan, are meant to represent a first step only in achieving the vision. The framework embraces a multi-phase approach, suggesting areas of focus and identifying funding priorities over the next 10 years.

The Looking Ahead Task Force presents **Ontario's Museums 2025** to OMA Council for its consideration, and to museums, stakeholders and funders for consultation. OMA Council will carefully review **Ontario's Museums 2025** to determine how it will guide the development of the OMA's strategic plan for 2015-2020. We hope that **Ontario's Museums 2025** similarly informs the province's work on a new Culture Strategy.

The action plan itself should be a living document subject to its own assessment of effectiveness and relevance. The OMA and its partners plan to undertake a review and update at least every five years.

## Description of Framework Components

### Themes

Informed by research and sector input, four defining strategic areas emerge. These areas of focus reflect current challenges and future goals, but they also speak to our enduring and defining values.

### Outcomes

Each theme identifies relevant outcomes. They provide direction toward realizing the vision represented by the theme.

### Actions

Each outcome is achieved through one or more actions. Actions are activities that will be prioritized; for each action there will be designated responsibility.

## Research & Assessment

The framework's foundation rests on ongoing research and assessment. Research undertaken by the Looking Ahead Initiative informed the contents of this framework. It's been used by the Task Force to develop themes, outcomes and actions. Further discreet research may be required to realize a specific recommendation, and may be identified as an action in the plan. Research will also inform the future assessment of the framework itself. It will be used to determine the success of the strategic vision and action plan, and to identify areas needing refinement or increased attention.

In addition to its use in the ongoing development of the framework, **Ontario's Museums 2025** argues in favour of the fundamental role of research and assessment to museum work itself. It advocates for a new culture of outcome-based evaluation — the need to embed impact-driven data collection into every aspect of our work.

Museums currently generate extensive data and information on their operations and activities. This information is used in reports to funders to demonstrate accountability in the use of public monies and other funds.

However, on a sector- and provincial-level:

- There is a lack of a coordinated and consistent approach to museum data collection in Ontario.
- It is difficult to access data that is collected.
- There is little analysis or reporting of the data that is collected.

As a result, it is challenging to validate data that is collected, to compare data from different sources, or to compile a comprehensive profile of the activities, health, or impact of Ontario museums.

In Ontario, other sectors — library and arts in particular — are ahead of the museum sector in the processes of consistent data and information collection, analysis and reporting.

Museums need to do more than articulate why they matter; they need to prove it! Museums need to re-examine their work and make the case for their value through meaningful evidence that demonstrates impacts.

**Ontario's Museums 2025** seeks to develop a rigorous evaluation system that would inform the development of long-term objectives, as well as link goal-setting to self-assessment — both on institutional and sectoral levels.

Currently, museums face significant pressure to justify their value and demonstrate their impact in terms, and against measures, set by funding bodies and government. These measures are almost exclusively quantitative. Without arguing the merits of fiscal accountability and operational efficiency, **Ontario's Museums 2025** seeks a new accountability that would counterbalance the current instrumental framework in which museums operate to secure funding.

An evaluation culture built around outcome-based evaluation would also shape a new dynamic for the relationships between museums, their funders and the public.

## Roles & Relationships

The effective realization of the strategic vision for Ontario's museums in 2025 requires a reconsideration of roles and relationships, as well as active and collaborative participation from the following:

- Ontario Museum Association
- Provincial Government & Local Governments
- Individual Museums

These three groups will be instrumental to success in achieving the top action areas.

We also recognize that the full potential of Ontario's museums will require additional consideration of the roles of:

- Other museum associations and other professional associations

- Regional museum networks
- The cultural sector, including arts and libraries
- Education sector
- Foundations, including community foundations
- Corporate and philanthropic donors

## Roles in 2025

### Ontario Museum Association (OMA):

Looking ahead to 2025, as a result of this strategic vision the role of the OMA has expanded. Working with partners in academia as well as museum and cultural sectors, the OMA is now active in conducting and disseminating results of sector studies and/or research. Reports include sector snapshots that highlight museums' status in achieving the outcomes and actions noted in this document. Research is used to inform revisions of the strategic vision and action plan.

In 2025, the OMA has worked with MTCS and local governments to develop relevant funding models. The OMA has a lead and a continuing role in the ongoing development and management of benchmarks and performance indicators.

The OMA has taken on an important role in the marketing and promotion of museums in 2025. In addition to general public awareness, with the intent of fostering public support for public funding of museums, the OMA is working to increase the profile of museums with foundations and corporations. In its promotion and advocacy activities, the OMA is working with private sector champions.

In achieving its promotion work and in the development of relevant funding models, the OMA has formed part of a strong cultural coalition in 2025, working with related professional associations and other organizations. This group is active in developing professional training opportunities and developing models for shared spaces, shared service delivery and shared resources.

In 2025, the OMA is working with partners to provide advice and resources for museums to meet professional standards and best practices — especially those struggling with challenges.

The OMA is playing a larger role within the local government context, highlighting means to partner with museums and support them. To achieve this work, the

OMA liaises with relevant organizations, including the Association of Municipalities in Ontario (AMO).

### Governments:

Museums in 2025 could offer valuable opportunities for all levels of government to further their own interests and priorities. Museums could play a vital role in realizing educational and health agendas. They could be important places for services on immigration and new citizenship. Museums could work with governments to support the innovation, research and development needed for a new knowledge-based economy. Reinvestment and a new model of operational funding are both needed to realize this vision.

Museums in 2025 should benefit from strong and consistent operating support from both provincial and local governments. Government monies should be refocused to support core areas relating to the museum's mission/mandate, and museums can fundraise and otherwise secure revenue to meet project needs.

Working with museums, municipalities and the federal government, the province needs to provide leadership through use of legislation and development of policies to further an inter-ministerial and inter-governmental collaboration and support for museums.

### Local Government

Looking ahead to 2025, the majority of operating funds for most museums will still come from local governments. Currently, the level and nature of local government support is highly variable – some museums are owned and operated by municipalities and others receive grants. This variability and reliance is a concern in smaller communities facing an aging population, outmigration, and a decreasing tax base. In 2025, museums operating in these conditions see a larger role for the provincial government in supporting their operations.

### Province of Ontario

At present, provincial support of Ontario's museums is considered important, as indicated by supporting pieces of current legislation:

- Regulation 877 under the *Ontario Heritage Act* provides for grants to museums. The Community Museum Operating Grant program exists under this regulation.

- Art galleries, including art museums, receive significant operating funding support from the Ontario Arts Council, operating under the *Arts Council Act*.

Museums which operate as provincial agencies have their own enacting legislation.

Currently, 173 of approximately 670 museums in Ontario receive funding through the provincial Community Museum Operating Grant program, with a total funding level of \$5,007,585. However, this program is dated, and will not effectively support Ontario museums in 2025.

In 2025, a new funding program needs to be in place that:

- Provides for equitable access to funds by Ontario's museums, according to criteria and formulas established in consultation with Ontario's museums;
- Features a multi-year grant period of at least three years, reflecting good business practices for operational planning documents (e.g. budget);
- Streamlines the application process, and ensures information required from the applicant is reflective of the funding amount requested and or funding levels established by the program. All information collected as part of the application and grant review process should be open and accessible, in line with the government's Open Data Initiative;
- Considers the capacity of museums, from small volunteer-run organizations to large professionally staffed ones; and,
- Is based on meaningful standards and performance-based measures that are developed and administered by the museum sector in consultation with government.

### Museums:

Each museum will have to consider the strategic vision and the action plan within the context of its own operations and its long-term planning. Museums will benefit from new models and new practices developed as a result of this document.

Looking forward to 2025, museums have committed to continuing professionalization and ongoing assessment. These museums form part of a strong sector valued by the public, funders and stakeholders. Having incorporated the vision and action plan into their work in the last 10 years, these museums experience success

that is based on strong funding models and public support, robust operations, relevant collections models, meaningful partnerships, and increased community engagement.



Children learning to garden, May 2015 - Courtesy of the Markham Museum

### MARKHAM MUSEUM (MARKHAM), A COMMUNITY MUSEUM

The Markham Museum aims to be a gathering place for the Markham community. The museum strives to be responsive to its citizens, providing an inclusive space for learning, and an organization that is environmentally responsible. Markham Museum fosters a rich, safe, and engaging environment for both its visitors and workers, from programming and exhibits developed in partnership with Markham's ethnocultural groups, to an open workplace supportive of LGBT youth.

Markham Museum is recognized for the public service it provides and its ability to foster community identity and social cohesion. The museum is noted as an important vehicle to achieving the recommendations of the city's Diversity Action Plan.

Recently, the museum has made a number of responsible improvements, including building a LEED Gold Standard exhibition hall, and creating a functional rain garden on museum grounds. These projects and programs are indications of Markham Museum's role as a leader in the Markham community.



Canadian Conservation Institute workshop on making mannequins for costume display, Lennox & Addington County Museum & Archives, February 2015 - Ontario Museum Association

Here we present the **suggested actions** that would support the themes and outcomes noted previously.

The Looking Ahead Task Force and the OMA believe clear actions are critical to the realization of the strategic vision. Taken together, the actions form an implementation process that is sector-generated and sector-led. This action plan represents a maturing of our sector. We must now work together and take action to affect positive changes and growth.

Six action areas are identified. They provide another means to organize the actions, and relate to one or more outcomes. These action areas will be important for the Ontario Museum Association in the development and implementation of its next strategic plan.

#### LEGEND:



**Action for Vibrant & Vital Museums**



**Action for Relevant & Meaningful Collections**



**Action for Strong & Successful Sector**



**Action for Effective & Collaborative Workforce**

### Increase public access and engagement, awareness and support for museums.

- 1** **Develop tools, strategies and best practices for museums to consult with their communities and facilitate community participation in museum planning and work.**  
 Communicate best practices on sites that 'connect', e.g. strategic plan completed with consultation and involvement by the community.  
 Determine commonalities between sites that are connecting with their community.  
 Empower and support museums in developing messages to raise community awareness.
- 2** **Develop tools, strategies and best practices for museums on using digital technology and social media to enable public access and to create connected networks.**
- 3** **Develop tools, strategies and best practices for museums on providing dynamic and engaging learning, as well as other experiences.**  
 This action refers to all interpretation and services, and the need to keep them relevant. Interpretation is seen as a fundamental museum role.
- 4** **Communicate best practices on how to effectively engage youth (15-24) and seniors (60+).**  
 Youth and seniors are identified as target groups here, based on general demographic trends. Museums also need to consider the demographic profile of their own communities, however defined, when identifying their specific target groups.
- 5** **Recruit members of the museum's governing authority that represent the diversity of the communities and population being served.**  
 To include the communication of best practice examples, development of workshops, creation of tools to help museums with inclusive recruitment etc.  
 To include collaboration and partnership with other professional associations and groups in cultural and not-for-profit sectors.
- 6** **Consider thematic opportunities to showcase collections across the province, and to foster public understanding of the importance of collections.**  
 Could consider existing models like Culture Days; could also include a web-based/online component to showcase collective activities.
- 7** **Develop a marketing campaign.**  
 A campaign that clearly illustrates how investment in museums affects the quality of community life, along with other benefits.
- 8** **Develop advocacy tools and support.**  
 The OMA will work with museums to develop resources to support local advocacy efforts. Resources may include a toolkit, as well as OMA staff support. Consideration will also be given to the important regional museum network role. Also, work should include increasing the profile with private sector and other funders, including individuals/community leaders and foundations, in order to articulate a clear case for support. This work may include identifying "champions"/supporters to advocate with and for museums.

- 9 Undertake study of current museum funding models and recommend new funding strategy.**  
Undertake discussions with province re. *Ontario Heritage Act/Municipal Act*, CMOG/OAC etc.; with The Ontario Trillium Foundation.  
Determine baseline requirements for museums to be successful, as well as resources needed to achieve best practices — including capital maintenance and renewal funding needs.
- 10 Work with municipalities and municipal cultural workers to foster awareness of shared values and municipal support for museums.**  
Conduct discussions with AMO, MTCS and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as to the importance of the municipal role. Consider constituting a group of senior municipal cultural leaders for discussions.
- 11 Develop models for shared spaces, shared service delivery and shared resources, identifying potential partners to better optimize the use of resources.**
- 12 Pursue partnerships and shared costs for collections care.**  
This action could be phased in as a pilot project. It would consider economies of scale and could include shared expertise for collections care, including conservation services, curatorial advice, registrar role, etc.
- 13 Develop model for shared storage.**  
This model could be financed through cost sharing and subsidized with provincial support. It could have a regional focus and could have a tie-in with regional museum networks. Storage would be climate controlled and would meet professional standards. Model would consider visible storage set-up.
- 14 Undertake regional forums with museums, other not-for-profits, and the private sector, in order to promote museums and identify shared interests.**  
OMA could spearhead meetings with key private-sector leaders, cultural heritage sector allies, etc., to talk about key initiatives and goals, relevance of museums to economy (provincially and locally) and community building. Meetings held in cooperation with local museum networks, local council and other partners.
- 15 Pursue a formal culture partnership/alliance.**  
Facilitate communication between sectors, which would lead to a larger footprint in economic and social impacts, plus greater public awareness and support, and stronger positioning in our work with governments.
- 16 Encourage museums to incorporate environmental sustainability in their work.**  
May begin with recognition and communication of best practices – could include public acknowledgement (on OMA website) of museums with LEED-accredited structures, or museums that have received awards related to environmental sustainability.

### Renew the collections model.

- 17 Develop a province-wide coordinated approach to collecting, and ensure collections represent the diversity of Ontario.**  
This province-wide initiative may focus on areas of importance (e.g. gaps in collections) determined by participating museums or groups of museums. Includes consideration of new models for ownership and stewardship.

- 18 Develop online database of collection records that is broadly accessible.**  
Offers general public access to records. Serves as a research tool, allowing for identification of gaps/duplications in collections. Facilitates exchanges and collaborations, including loans. Needs to include consideration of training.

### Create research capacity and foster research-based environment.

- 19 Create research capacity that draws from existing research but also identifies new research needed to make a case for museums.**  
Pull together existing research for broad access.  
Determine methodology for new data collection, prioritizing data on community engagement.  
Explore partnerships with universities and other professional museum associations for collection, analysis and reporting of research.  
Consider necessary staffing and other resources to support collection, analysis, and reporting of research.  
Develop sector-defined measures of success that include qualitative outcomes.  
Develop system of outcome evaluation in the long-term.
- 20 Undertake study on current economic impact of Ontario's museums and determine strategic areas for future development.**  
To include current economic contributions, i.e. direct and indirect tangible benefits, and determination of ROI etc. Also could include determination of “value” — number of people willing to invest directly in museums, where museums sit in motivating tourists, etc. Results will inform recommendations on how museums can develop their potential to make greater and more meaningful economic impacts on their communities and the province.
- 21 Undertake a study of current status of museum buildings and develop a plan for action.**  
Study should consider accessibility as well as maintenance issues.
- 22 Identify sources of demographic information and communicate these to museums.**

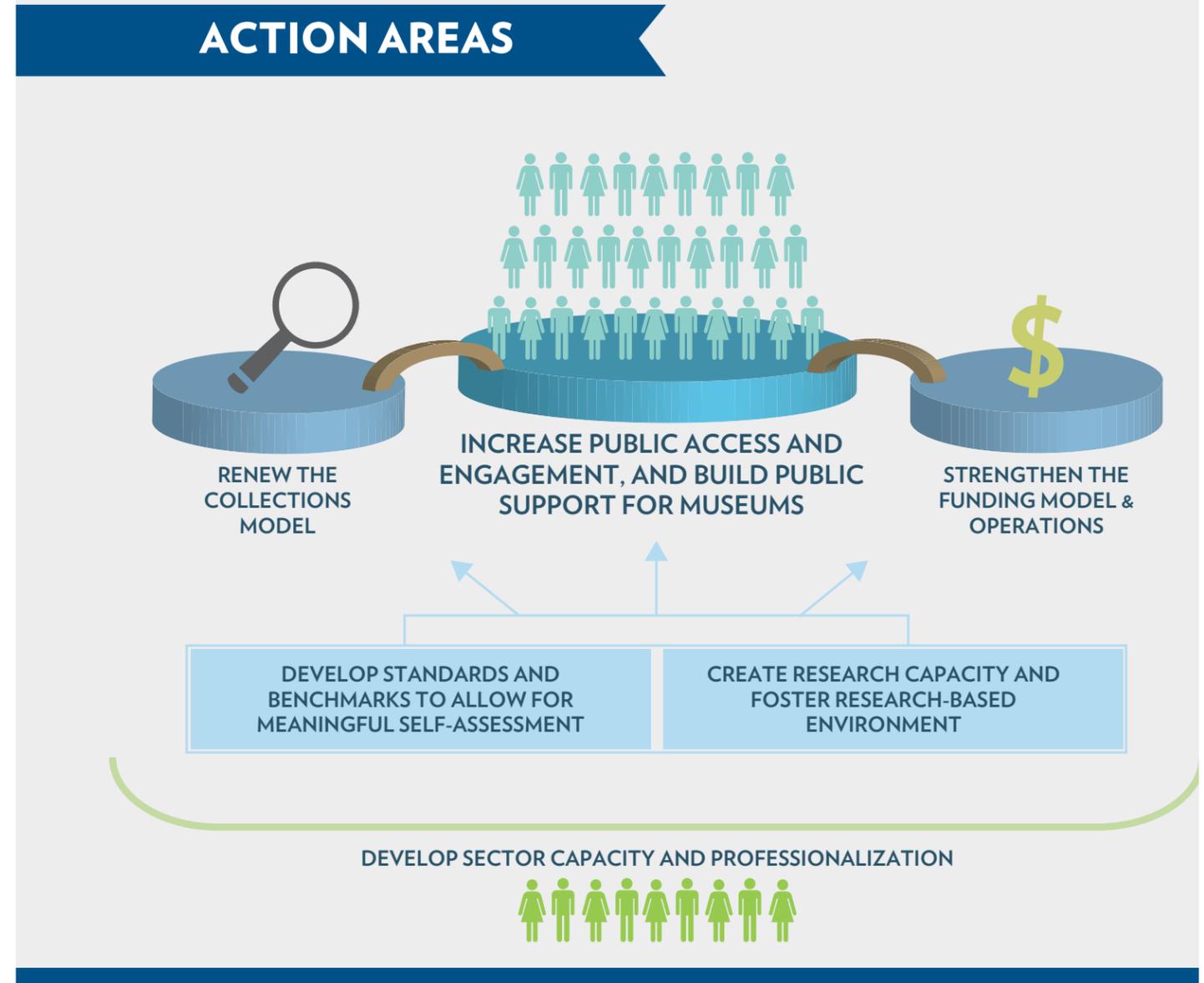
### Develop standards and benchmarks to allow for meaningful self-assessment.

- 23 Establish a Working Group with relevant representation to consider the development of benchmarks.**  
Group would review current assessment models, including CMOG, and evaluation criteria.  
Group would identify gaps and make recommendations supported by data from research work.  
Group would first prioritize work on community engagement.
- 24 Develop planning standards for community engagement and public relevance, then report on results.**  
Planning standards to include set of sector-wide measures (quantitative and qualitative) for ‘public value’. These measures would help assess the health of our sector (e.g. report card) and could also serve as a communications tool. These measures could be used to develop sector benchmarks. They could also be helpful to institutions for their annual business planning, and for their strategic planning.

- 25** Consider standards/benchmarks for museum access (hours and admissions), and for amenities (gift shops, food service), and public use of museum space.  
 This would help provide quality experiences and increase accessibility. Under consideration would be the ways space is allocated, with more flexibility for a wider range of activities.
- 26** Consider standards/benchmarks for use of collections that would address public access.  
 This would help increase accessibility, and would rethink “use” beyond exhibition.
- 27** Develop key performance indicators around community building.  
 These indicators should be based on benchmarks. They may form a priority area for focus, along with qualitative indicators that are being considered for Vibrant & Vital Museums. The development of the indicators will be informed by the results of the economic impact study.

**Develop sector capacity and professionalization.**

- 28** Establish a forum for conversations on museum role, including discussion of the social responsibility of museums.  
 Group can determine areas for future development of strategic vision and related training and professional development opportunities. Should consider a multi-delivery platform for discussions. Comprises a Leadership Group of sorts, whose members are established and emerging professionals. Group may also consider work on benchmarks and performance indicators.
- 29** Establish a Regional Museum Advisory Committee to the OMA.  
 Committee would have representation from the regions, and could include representation from museum studies programs.
- 30** Consider a pilot employment program that would create a bridge for recent graduates and emerging professionals.  
 Need to advocate for funding for this transition.
- 31** Support diversity in the workplace so that museum staff reflects the communities and population being served.  
 Build awareness and communicate information about diversity within the workplace. This can include best practice examples, workshops etc.  
 Create tools to help museums with inclusive hiring – tools that tell them how to do it.



ACTION AREAS

The Looking Ahead Task Force and the OMA considered a phased approach to implement the strategic vision and action plan, recognizing the challenges of current workloads and limited resources.

Over the next five years, we recommend targeting our efforts, and our actions, on key areas. These areas are connection points between the actions, and speak to the interrelationships and links among the themes and outcomes.

In trying to organize the connections, the diagram also considers ideas of cause/effect, and means/ends, including:

**1. What are the ends we are trying to achieve?**

**2. What are the means to achieving those ends – assets and resources needed?**

**3. How do we know if we’ve achieved the end/outcome?**

Using this approach, a blueprint emerges. The focal point of the above diagram centres on public access, engagement and support. Funding and collections are shown as means to achieving this result. Research and benchmarks are also means that are used to determine our success in achieving the end.



Discussions during Looking Ahead Talking Circles, October 2014 - Ontario Museum Association

### We want to hear from you!

We know that the success of any vision and action plan relies on the contribution of those who work in museums and those who support our work.

We look forward to discussions with you throughout Winter 2015/2016 on:

#### Framework:

- Is this framework a valuable way for the sector to organize itself?
- Is it the right approach for Ontario's museum sector?

#### Strategic Vision:

- Do the themes resonate with you?
- Is an important idea missing?

#### Action Plan:

- Do you agree with the actions noted?
- From the list, which are your top three priorities for your museum, the museum sector, and the OMA?

#### Roles & Responsibilities:

- Thinking of especially the action plan, and the actions noted, in 2025 what should be the role and of:
  - Museums and museum workers
  - OMA
  - Provincial government
  - Local government
- What are the other groups that have main roles to be play? What are their responsibilities?

You can answer these questions, or provide other comments and feedback in different ways.

#### Write us, post, or tweet at:

lookingahead@museumsontario.ca  
 www.facebook.com/museumsontario  
 #ONmuseums2025



#### Join us for an online discussion!

For dates and times, please visit:  
[members.museumsontario.ca](http://members.museumsontario.ca)

Click on the *Ontario's Museums 2025: Looking Ahead* banner.

We will consider all feedback received by **February 29, 2016**. Your participation in developing **Ontario's Museums 2025** is essential to ensuring its success.

Informed by its previous work and the 2010-2015 strategic plan titled *Reinforcing Relevance*, the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) began developing a project in 2013 to identify the social and economic impacts of Ontario's museums. Information on impacts was needed by the OMA to meet its advocacy objective — to raise the profile of museums as necessary and relevant to Ontario's society. The targets of these advocacy efforts were to be governments and other funders, who themselves sought this information as they pursued evidence-based, decision-making models and efficiencies to meet deficit reduction goals.

The OMA itself had encountered significant challenges in trying to access information on Ontario's museum sector. Many museums do gather extensive information and report on their activities to various funders and stakeholders. However, access to and the sharing of this information is limited. Lacking a coordinated approach, it is also difficult to compare data from different museums. As a result, there is no comprehensive profile of Ontario museums that could be used to identify sector successes and challenges, to inform future planning, and to advocate for support.

In developing the project concept, the OMA began to give considerable thought to the use of any data collected and research undertaken. In discussions with OMA staff, OMA Council and members, the "purpose" for the data collection came to the forefront. The underlying assumption was that the data was needed to support museums' case. But what was the case that museums were trying to make? In business terms, what was the value proposition offered? In this difficult environment, it seemed that museums struggled to articulate their value and relevance on local and provincial levels, let alone basing any arguments made on strong data.

As a result, the project shifted its focus to the fundamental question: What is the value of Ontario's museums to the public in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In considering this question, the potential of Ontario's museums was explored, along with the necessary work and resources needed to realize that potential.

In framing the project work, the following points were highlighted:

- A clear case is needed for Ontario's museums; an

answer is needed as to why museums matter. This case would reference economic contributions but would preference the social impacts — the tangible and intangible benefits of museums for the public and society. These benefits, both existing and potential, should be embodied in the larger museum role and institutional mandates.

- Ontario's museums need to work more collaboratively — to build not only the capacity of institutions and the capacity of the sector, but to build public awareness. Greater public awareness is needed to generate more meaningful and stable funding models.
- Ontario's museums need to be able to confidently demonstrate their impact, both as institutions in their local communities, and as a sector on the provincial scale. A sector commitment to outcome-based evaluation will also indicate transparency and accountability, both of which are necessary in generating public support. Any assessment models would have to focus on outcomes — measuring what matters, determining the important impacts made by Ontario's museums.

Based on the above, project deliverables changed. The Looking Ahead Initiative would develop a strategic vision and action plan for Ontario's museum sector. Data on Ontario's museums was still needed, but it would now be used to support the development, implementation and continuing assessment of this vision.

## SECTOR INVOLVEMENT & INPUT:

### Looking Ahead Task Force

Although the project was initiated by the OMA, the change in focus and outcomes required active participation and engagement with the museum sector. As a result, the OMA established a Task Force to play a lead role in developing the work. Membership represented the depth and breadth of Ontario's museum community. Candidates for the Task Force were first identified by members of the project team, based on the following criteria:

- Representation from OMA and non-OMA members
- Representation from museums receiving Community Museum Operating Grants and those that do not receive this funding
- Representation from organizations which operate as federal/provincial agencies, within municipal

- departments or divisions, or not-for-profit charities
- Representation from a broad range of Ontario tourism regions, as defined by the province
- Representation from a broad definition of museums with various activity types, including but not limited to art galleries, community museums, science centres, etc.

The list of names was considered by the OMA's Executive Director and by the OMA's President. Task Force membership was ratified by the OMA Council.

These volunteers were invited to serve in the role of Task Force members, and graciously gave of their time and expertise:

Yves Théoret, Task Force Chair  
*National Gallery of Canada (to August 2015),  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (present)*

Karen Bachmann  
*Timmins Museum: National Exhibition Centre*

Carolyn Bell Farrell  
*MacLaren Art Centre*

Marty Brent  
*Peel Art Gallery, Museums & Archives*

Janet Carding, 2014-2015  
*Royal Ontario Museum (to March 2015),  
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (present)*

Diane Imrie  
*Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame*

Ian Kerr-Wilson  
*City of Hamilton*

Guy Labine  
*Science North*

Xerxes Mazda, 2015  
*Royal Ontario Museum (to September 2015),  
National Museums Scotland (present)*

Cathy Molloy  
*Markham Museum*

Bill Poole  
*Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery*

Michael Rikley-Lancaster  
*Mississippi Valley Textile Museum*

Paul Robertson  
*City of Kingston*

## Consultation

Broad consultation and engagement was a critical component of the research framework established for the Looking Ahead Initiative. Consultation included stakeholder interviews, the sector scan survey, and roundtable discussions.

The primary objectives of the consultation included gathering sector and stakeholder feedback to inform the development of the strategic vision and action plan.

Additional objectives were:

1. To identify sector and stakeholder perceptions of the primary role of museums;
2. To determine sector trends, needs and issues;
3. To identify sector position(s) on role and responsibilities, of note: government funding, including the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) program;
4. To determine sector opinions(s) on research/information needs and approaches; and,
5. To determine sector opinion(s) on benchmarks, performance indicators, and accreditation.

## Stakeholder Interviews:

29 in-depth interviews, comprising 37 hours of discussion, were conducted with museum professionals and other stakeholders from October 23 to December 9, 2014. Interviewees included individuals working within the culture sector, including those within arts, tourism, built heritage and libraries. Interviewees also included individuals with experience in related data collection projects, as well as those working in academia. In addition, two formal interviews were undertaken in Spring 2015 to obtain funder perspectives.

All interviews followed a script to provide consistency in the subject matter addressed. Due to limited project resources, the interview process comprised a combination of face-to-face, telephone and web-based interviews. Face-to-face interviews occurred exclusively within the Greater Toronto Area.

The interviews were an invaluable tool for consultation, as they also provided a unique opportunity within the museum sector and among stakeholders to create and foster understanding and support of project goals.

### Sector Scan Survey:

The Sector Scan Survey was completed as an online survey from October 9 to November 21, 2014. Open to museum workers and other stakeholders, 140 completed surveys were received; the vast majority during the public six-week run. Two surveys were completed by members of the Emerging Museum Professional Advisory Committee in March 2015. Responses were received from museum professionals (near-equal representation by emerging, mid-career, and established employees), museum volunteers, arts/culture/heritage professionals, museum members/friends, municipal employees, academic interests, and people with general interest in museums.

The sector scan comprised 22 questions, the majority of which were open-ended. Questions were targeted in content and language to museum professionals. The survey was delivered through the SurveyMonkey platform.

The survey was broadly marketed through the OMA's existing communication vehicles. The total reach exceeded 1,260 members and stakeholders – those listed on the OMA's formal contact list as well as OMA's online users and followers.

### Roundtable Discussions

The Looking Ahead Initiative was the topic of a roundtable discussion held at the OMA's 2014 Conference in Alliston, ON. Approximately 200 delegates of wide ranging backgrounds and experience participated in the session on October 16, 2014. Additional presentations and discussions occurred at meetings of regional museum networks in Spring 2015, including the Waterloo-Wellington Museums & Galleries Network on May 4, 2015, the Toronto Museum Network on June 4, 2015, and the Grey Bruce Dufferin Regional Museum Network on June 15, 2015.

### OMA COUNCIL

Yves Théoret, OMA President  
*National Gallery of Canada (to August 2015),  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (present)*

Gilles Séguin, OMA Past President  
*Parks Canada Agency*

Clark Bernat, OMA Vice President  
*City of Niagara Falls Museums*

John Dalrymple, OMA Secretary  
*Canada's National Ballet School*

Emanuele Lepri, OMA Treasurer  
*Bata Shoe Museum*

Cheryl Fraser  
*Royal Ontario Museum*

Petal Furness  
*Grey Roots Museum & Archives*

Cathy Masterson  
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Braden Murray, 2014-2015  
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