

history, from fine arts to zoology. Furthermore, 74 per cent of them were documented, which shows the high degree of professionalism of our curators.

In the past twenty years or so, the architecture of our museums has evolved, as it has in many other countries. We adapt it to take account of our new requirements, our dynamism and multiculturalism and the increasing number of forms of expression. Museums free us from the bonds of time and space and help us understand how a people came to be and help us to get in touch with other cultures. Their contribution to society is highly appreciated, if one goes by the number of visitors: 20 million annually, much more than the number of people who attend paying sports events.

For the Government, museums are essential for any society that sees culture as something as necessary as the right to health. This concept arose in western societies in the 1950s and since then, Canada has always been in step with it, giving culture a special place.

France, for example, has three public institutions and 32 state-run museums, most of which perform a scientific advisory role. The British Government is responsible for 19 state museums throughout the country. And even the United States, which has a strong private sector tradition, has entrusted the federal Government with maintaining the Smithsonian Institute.

By giving \$5 to \$6 per capita for our museum institutions and following the present trend to specifying the Government's role in their organization, management and financial support, we are acting like other western countries.

In 1968, Gérard Pelletier, then Secretary of State, brought forth a cultural policy that was to have clear objectives, the resources necessary to attain them and a timetable for implementing them. For Gérard Pelletier, culture was not just for the elite. It should be available to all Canadians, in both economically advantaged and disadvantaged regions. That same year, he gave us the National Museums Act, whose purpose was to present the work of nature and man, with an emphasis on Canada, but not to the exclusion of other societies, in order to interest everyone and to spread knowledge.

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From the 1968 National Museums Act to the 1972 national museums policy, we came, after several steps, to this awareness of the role of the state. After 21 years, the Act needed revision to help us better meet contemporary challenges.

Because of the importance of museums in our society, in January 1986, we created the task force headed by Richard Withrow to review our museum policy. The Museum Bill was drafted after wide-ranging consultation with the special interest groups and government agencies concerned and after considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Communications, Culture, Citizenship and Multiculturalism.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member for Bourassa (Mrs. Gibeau) will be able to continue her speech as soon as the House resumes sitting later this afternoon.

It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IMPACT OF PROGRAM CUTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, in 1984 the Prime Minister declared that he was not afraid to inflict prosperity on Newfoundland and the other Atlantic provinces.

Over the past few weeks the Government has launched an unprecedented assault on the people of Atlantic Canada.

In Summerside, P.E.I., the Tories shut down the Canadian Forces Base.

In Newfoundland, the Tories gave northern cod to the French and cut quotas for our own fishermen.

In New Brunswick, the McKenna Government has been forced to carry on regional development programs alone.