



News Release

For Immediate Release

December 7, 2020

Auditor General: Ontario's Museum and Gallery Collections Need to Be Better Managed

(TORONTO) Acquisition practices, and the management of artwork and objects in their collections need improvement at three of Ontario's largest cultural institutions, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her *2020 Annual Report* released today.

"The Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection could not always show that the acquisitions they made were needed to meet the objectives they had established for their collections," said Lysyk. "They also need plans to promptly display more of their newly acquired works so that Ontarians have the opportunity to enjoy them."

The Report noted that the AGO, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (McMichael) have many idle items in their collections—that is, items that have not been displayed or loaned to other institutions. At the AGO, over 70% of the items in its collection had not been displayed since they were acquired. In addition, at McMichael about half of its collection had not been displayed for more than 20 years, and at the ROM, nearly 20% of the items in its arts and culture collection had also not been displayed for more than 20 years.

The Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries provided \$52 million to the three institutions in 2019/20. Art donations also result in donors receiving charitable donation tax receipts, which adds to the cost of these institutions in the form of forgone tax revenue.

The Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) alone accounted for \$101 million, or 22% of all income tax certificates issued by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board (CCPERB) for donations made to all Canadian institutions over the past five years.

While the audit found all three institutions did a good job storing artwork and objects according to best practices, none had policies to conduct regular inventory checks to verify the existence of the items in their collections. Also, none of them routinely estimated the financial value of their collections to evaluate whether they maintained sufficient insurance coverage.

-30-

For more information, please contact:
Bonnie Lysyk
Auditor General
(647) 267-9263

Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca

 @OntarioAuditor

Background and Other Findings:

- In 2019/20, the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries provided a total of \$52 million in funding to the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.
- More than 2 million people visited these three cultural institutions in 2019/20.
- Donations certified by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board (CCPERB) provide donors with additional tax advantages compared to those that are not certified.
- The audit found the museum and art galleries funded by the province do a good job storing and preserving artwork and objects.
- The audit found that the museum and art galleries did not update the value of artwork and objects held in collections to ensure they maintained sufficient insurance coverage, and none had policies in place to conduct regular inventory checks to verify the existence of the objects in their collections.
- Research to prove the ownership and verify the authenticity of the items the museum and galleries acquired was not always completed or documented as their policies require.