



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Policies for City of Toronto Museum Collections

Date:	October 21, 2013
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve a revised set of policies to be administered by Museum Services relating to the City of Toronto's collections of artifacts, archaeological and natural history specimens and objects used for hands-on educational and programming purposes at City museums.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council approve the Historical Collection Development Policy (Attachment No. 1), the Historical Collection Management Policy (Attachment No. 2), the Living History Collection Policy (Attachment No. 3), the Personal Collections Policy (Attachment No. 4) and the related Definitions (Attachment No. 5).
2. City Council authorize and direct the appropriate City Officials to take the necessary action to give effect to Council's decision.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On June 18, 19 and 20, 2002, City Council approved management and development policies for the Historical Collection administered by Museum Services.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/council/cc020618/edp6rpt/cl010.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto is required to maintain collections management and development policies to meet the standards set for community museums in Ontario, thereby qualifying for Community Museum Operating Grants from the Province of Ontario.

The collections-related policies adopted by Council in 2002 satisfied provincial requirements and provided a key foundation for managing the City's artifacts and archaeological and natural history specimens.

Over time, these policies were increasingly viewed as being more descriptive than prescriptive, as well as repetitive, confusing and, in some cases, unworkable in practice. Museum Services staff undertook a project to review and revise these policies, with the aim of creating policies that are museologically and ethically sound and which clearly express the value and importance of museum practice to citizens, stakeholders and decision makers.

COMMENTS

The revised collections policies attached to this report will improve the stewardship capacity of Museum Services.

Compared to the previous versions, the new policies are: more focused and succinct; employ a set of crisp definitions; recognize the different management needs of a preservation-based Historical Collection (comprised of artifacts and archaeological and natural history specimens) and an education-based Living History Collection (comprised of objects used for hands-on programming purposes); propose broad public input for future acquisitions and deaccessioning through a Collections Plan; and eliminate unenforceable restrictions on personal collecting by Museum Services staff.

The revised policies reflect trends in the current museological literature and were developed in consultation with community stakeholders, peer museum staff and museum sector practitioners, and Museum Services staff. The City Solicitor has also been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

No. 1 – Historical Collection Development Policy
No. 2 – Historical Collection Management Policy
No. 3 – Living History Collection Policy
No. 4 – Personal Collections Policy
No. 5 – Definitions for the Historical Collection Development Policy, the Historical Collection Management Policy, the Living History Collection Policy and the Personal Collections Policy

**Attachment No. 1 –
HISTORICAL COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to guide how the City of Toronto will preserve the history of Toronto through the development of its Historical Collection, as managed by Museum Services.

The City shall develop the Historical Collection by acquiring artifacts and archaeological and natural history specimens, along with information on their provenance, history, and cultural significance, and shall follow standard practices of museum collecting.

As required to appropriately manage the Historical Collection as a whole, and guided by museum ethics and standards, the City may exchange, give away, destroy, sell, or otherwise dispose of objects in its collection. Any revenue obtained should be used to further the City's Historical Collection.

2. ACQUISITIONS:

Collecting for the Historical Collection will focus on the manageable acquisition of objects of genuine relevance and meaning to Toronto history. Collecting shall be selective and be carried out with professional discernment for authenticity, quality, excellence, condition and long-term utility.

2.1 Methods of Collecting

The City of Toronto will acquire objects through the following means:

- a) donation;
- b) exchange with other museums;
- c) field collecting;
- d) transfer from other City of Toronto collections or divisions;
- e) purchase.

2.2 Archaeological Collecting

Except where recovered on federal property, archaeological specimens in Ontario are owned by the Crown in right of Ontario which, through the Ontario Heritage Act, licenses archaeological excavations and designates repositories, including Museum Services.

2.2.1 Archaeological objects may be collected when recovered through licensed archaeological projects.

2.2.2 The City of Toronto shall not purchase or provide tax receipts or other transfers of monetary value for objects found as the result of archaeological digs, except in the following cases:

- a) the objects were collected prior to the Ontario Heritage Act, 1975 coming into force;
- b) other instances where the objects were collected lawfully.

2.3 Human Remains

Human remains shall not be acquired.

2.4 Acquisition Criteria

All objects proposed for acquisition will be assessed against the following primary and secondary criteria in order of priority:

Primary Criteria:

Museological Relevance

- a) relevance to city-wide collecting goals, making a meaningful contribution to a better understanding of Toronto's history;
- b) relevance to collecting goals associated with a particular City of Toronto museum and its specific interpretive mandate;
- c) aesthetic merit, historical/cultural significance or potential for research and scholarship;

Documentation & Title

- d) the provision of provenance and contextual documentation and the assurance of legal title to the object;

Secondary Criteria:

Condition & Preservation

- e) the physical condition of the object, the resources required for the object's storage, preservation, conservation, protection and acquisition;

Restrictions & Conditions

- f) except under exceptional circumstances, no restrictions or conditions are attached to the acquisition.

2.5 Public Transparency and Accountability

2.5.1 A Collections Plan shall be developed for approval by Council to establish the collecting mandate and priorities for the Historical Collection.

2.5.2 For proposed acquisitions of a sensitive nature or which exceed the delegated approval authority established by Council, input from professional peers and/or the community will be sought prior to making a recommendation to Council.

3. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL:

Since the City of Toronto intends to preserve the artifacts and specimens in the Historical Collection in perpetuity, the decision to deaccession and dispose of any artifact is taken only after careful consideration.

3.1 Criteria

3.1.1 An artifact may be deaccessioned if it:

- a) does not fall within the City's collecting mandate;
- b) poses a health and safety risk to employees of the City, the public, or the collection;
- c) is badly damaged or in a severe state of deterioration and does not warrant conservation resources;
- d) has quality incompatible with museum standards, including lack of authenticity, inadequate documentation, accessioned in error or inferior workmanship;
- e) does not have or is unlikely to obtain adequate resources for its care at museum standards;
- f) is replaced by a better example;
- g) is a duplicate in excess of the Historical Collection's requirements;
- h) is the subject of a successful claim for repatriation;
- i) has been found, through the provenance research or by proof of legal ownership by a third party, that the City does not have legal title.

3.1.2 An artifact may not be disposed of solely because of its monetary value.

3.2 Public Transparency and Accountability

Public notice of intention to deaccession artifacts shall be given in order to solicit input from the community.

3.3 Method of Disposal

3.3.1 No artifact in the Historical Collection shall be disposed of unless it has first been deaccessioned.

3.3.2 An artifact in the Historical Collection for which the City does not have legal title, and for which a rightful owner has been identified, shall either:

- a) be deaccessioned and returned to its legal owner; or
- b) be retained in the Historical Collection after the City obtains legal title to it; or
- c) be disposed of by the City, in cases where the object cannot be legally or safely returned to its legal owner.

3.3.3 Except in the case of a successful repatriation claim, no deaccessioned object shall be returned to its previous owner.

3.3.4 Except in the case of accidental loss or destruction, every effort shall be made to ensure that any object disposed of from the Historical Collection should remain in the public domain.

3.3.5. An object deaccessioned from the Historical Collection for which the City wishes to retain title may be transferred to another City of Toronto collection.

3.3.6. Deaccessioned objects will only be disposed of by the following methods, in order of preference:

- a) transfer as a donation, exchange for another object, or sale to another museum or public institution whose mission is relevant to the deaccessioned item, who will adequately care for the object, and who can assure public access;
- b) sale at public auction;
- c) destruction if the object cannot be repaired or conserved, or if it presents a physical danger to life or property.

3.3.7 Deaccessioned objects shall not be disposed of by any means to:

- a) Members of City Council;
- b) City staff;
- c) City volunteers;
- d) the families or representatives of any of the above.

3.4 Proceeds from Disposals

All proceeds from the sale of objects deaccessioned and disposed of from the Historical Collection shall be used solely to further the Historical Collection.

4. IMPLEMENTATION:

4.1 Lead Responsibility

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture, or designate, is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this policy, and recommending revisions as required from time to time.

4.2 Professional Ethics

The City of Toronto encourages its museum staff and volunteers to abide by the International Council of Museums Code of Professional Ethics, the Ethics Guidelines of the Canadian Museums Association, and the Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice of the Canadian Association for the Conservation of Cultural Property / Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.

4.3 Laws, Conventions and Treaties

The City of Toronto abides by Canadian laws and international conventions and treaties signed by Canada regarding the export, import, and disposition of cultural property.

**Attachment No. 2 –
HISTORICAL COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY**

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to guide how the City of Toronto will meet its collection stewardship obligations through the management of its Historical Collection, as managed by Museum Services.

The City of Toronto collects, preserves, researches, exhibits, and interprets a collection of artifacts and specimens relating to the history of Toronto. Museum Services is charged with the preservation and management of these artifacts and their related documentation and manages the collection according to current museum practice in order to safeguard it in perpetuity, to store and retrieve information about it, and to make both the objects and their related information readily accessible to staff, researchers and the public.

2. CARE, STORAGE AND DISPLAY:

2.1 Care of Objects

The City of Toronto will care for objects in its possession by ensuring that:

- a) storage areas and artifacts on display or loan have adequate security;
- b) potential risks are identified and mitigated and that risk management plans and procedures are in place;
- c) storage conditions are monitored and maintained to prevent damage to the collection from pests, pollutants, elevated levels of lighting and atmospheric changes in temperature and relative humidity;
- d) collections are handled properly by staff using equipment and technologies appropriate to the task;
- e) proper conditions are provided for the display of artifacts in City of Toronto museums and facilities, in traveling exhibitions, and in exhibits mounted by other institutions.

2.2 Housing of Objects

The City of Toronto will exclusively house, on a permanent basis, objects that have been acquired for its museum mandate and, on a temporary basis, objects borrowed for museum purposes and objects under acquisition review.

3. COLLECTION DOCUMENTATION:

The City of Toronto recognizes the fundamental importance of all documentation pertaining to the Historical Collection. The City shall ensure that documentation is consistent, accurate, accessible and secure through:

- a) timely and detailed registration and imaging of new acquisitions into the Historical Collection;
- b) the permanent retention of all artifact records, including those pertaining to objects that have been deaccessioned from the Historical Collection.

- c) implementation of a program of retrospective artifact documentation to bring all artifact and specimen documentation to a common standard.

4. ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION AND ASSOCIATED RECORDS:

4.1 Commitment to Access

The City of Toronto shall provide public and scholarly access to the Historical Collection and associated records, subject to any pertinent legal, workload, or conservation restrictions.

4.2 Limitations

The City of Toronto shall be guided by the provisions of the relevant access to information and privacy legislation in determining what portion of the documentation is considered within the public realm.

4.3 Fees

The City of Toronto shall maintain a fee schedule to recover costs for such activities as artifact handling, packing, imaging, transportation, and copying of documentation.

5. LOANS AND TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS:

5.1 In-loans

The City of Toronto may borrow objects from other museums, galleries, and private sources for the purposes of exhibition, research, programming and education.

5.2 Out-loans

The City of Toronto may lend objects from its Historical Collection to responsible institutions for the purposes of public exhibition, research, programming and education. Out-loans of artifacts and specimens from the Historical Collection to any entity other than a museum, gallery, archive or exhibition centre shall be made only in exceptional circumstances and where an obvious public benefit is achieved.

5.3 Loan Agreements

All loans are subject to a formal written agreement between the lender and the borrower, which ensures appropriate coverage of all insurance obligations and care of the objects. The borrower shall comply with all restrictions and conditions imposed on borrowed objects. Loan agreements shall specify the purpose and time period of the loan and will address the protection of intellectual property rights.

5.5 Permanent Loans

Permanent loans shall not be made or accepted.

5.6 Temporary Assignments

Artifacts may be subject to temporary assignments for contracted services, including contracts for conservation treatment and for reproduction. Such assignments shall not be considered loans for the purpose of this policy.

6. OBJECTS IN CUSTODY:

6.1 Temporary Custody

The City of Toronto accepts temporary custody of objects for acquisition review, identification and other museum purposes. All objects in temporary custody will be recorded and cared for at a professional level.

6.2 Abandoned Property and Unclaimed Loans

The City of Toronto shall take all appropriate legal means to resolve ownership issues arising from abandoned property and unclaimed loans before:

- a) assuming legal title to the object and either adding it to a City of Toronto collection or disposing of it; or,
- b) returning the object to its rightful owner, their heirs or successors; or
- c) disposing of the object in cases where it cannot be legally or safely returned to its rightful owner, their heirs or successors.

6.3 Appraisal and Identification Services

6.3.1 Museum Services shall co-operate with other public heritage agencies when requests are made for expert advice, within its logistical capabilities and specialized expertise.

6.3.2 Knowledgeable Museum Services staff may provide appraisals on artifacts and specimens to meet the City's internal needs such as:

- a) providing an estimated value for objects to be purchased; or
- b) for insurance valuations.

6.3.3 For donations of property, knowledgeable Museum Services staff may provide fair market value appraisals on artifacts or specimens up to \$1,000.00 to provide the donor with a tax receipt. Museum Services may commission professional appraisals for donations of property with a fair market value of \$1,000.00 and over, either at its expense, at the donor's expense, or on a cost-shared basis.

6.3.4 Museum Services staff shall not offer financial appraisals or evaluations of objects to the general public when a potential acquisition is not involved.

6.3.5 Museum Services staff may provide identification services as a service to the public providing that:

- a) expertise is available;
- b) all opinions are provided for information purposes only, and the City and its staff shall not be held responsible in law for the opinion; and
- c) there is no reason to suspect that the information provided would be used for illegal or unethical purposes.

7. IMPLEMENTATION:

7.1 The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture, or designate, is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this policy, and recommending revisions as required from time to time.

7.2 In managing its Historical Collection, the City of Toronto endeavours to meet the standards of museum practice and ethics as established by professional organizations, such as the International Council of Museums, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Canadian Museums Association, the Canadian Conservation Institute, the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.

**Attachment No. 3 –
LIVING HISTORY COLLECTION POLICY**

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to describe how the City of Toronto will develop and manage its Living History Collection, as managed by Museum Services.

The City of Toronto will assemble appropriate original and replica objects as part of a Living History Collection to support museum activities and the preservation of the Historical Collection. These objects are not meant to be a permanent resource but are intended to be used for hands-on educational and programming purposes. The management of the Living History Collection is not bound by the management policies of the Historical Collection.

2. ACQUISITIONS:

Original items shall, first and foremost, be considered for addition to the Historical Collection prior to the Living History Collection.

2.1 Overall Quality of the Living History Collection

Collecting shall be selective and be carried out with professional discernment for appropriateness, quality, excellence, condition and long-term utility.

2.2 Acquisition Methods

Objects may be acquired by purchase, donation, exchange, transfer after deaccessioning from the Historical Collection, or any other appropriate transaction by which clear title may be transferred to the City of Toronto.

2.3 Exclusions

The Living History Collection does not include props purchased for a single use, or other consumables.

3. CARE AND STORAGE:

The Living History Collection is made up of objects and materials intended to be placed in environments or used in processes that may lead to their deterioration. Objects and materials may be altered, maintained or repaired as required to continue their long-term viability in the Living History Collection.

4. COLLECTION DOCUMENTATION:

Permanent records regarding the acquisition, location, repair, or disposal of objects in the Living History Collection will be kept and be maintained separately from the records for the Historical Collection.

5. LOANS:

Out-loans of objects from the Living History Collection may be made to any party as meets the interests of the City.

6. DISPOSAL:

Objects which are broken or are no longer suitable for use as part of the Living History Collection may be disposed of.

7. IMPLEMENTATION:

6.1 Lead Responsibility

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture, or designate, is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this policy, and recommending revisions as required from time to time.

6.2 Professional Ethics

In developing and managing its Living History Collection, the City of Toronto endeavours to meet the standards of museum practice and ethics as established by professional organizations, such as the International Council of Museums, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Canadian Museums Association, the Canadian Conservation Institute, the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.

**Attachment No. 4 –
PERSONAL COLLECTIONS POLICY**

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to guide the actions of City of Toronto Museum Services staff and volunteers to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest, to ensure that personal collecting and trading activity does not reflect negatively on the City, to avoid confusion between personal objects and City-owned artifacts, and to minimize the City's liability for personal objects of museological interest brought onto City property.

2. COMPETITION WITH CITY COLLECTING ACTIVITIES:

2.1 Objects of Potential Acquisition Interest

Museum Services staff and volunteers are encouraged to bring objects of potential acquisition interest for inclusion in the City's Historical or Living History Collections to the City's attention.

2.2 Approaching Potential Donors and Sellers

Museum Services staff and volunteers are discouraged from approaching potential donors or sellers of objects of potential acquisition interest to the City in order to acquire such objects for their personal collection.

3. PURCHASE OF PERSONAL COLLECTIONS:

The City of Toronto shall not purchase objects offered for sale by City staff and will not issue tax receipts for objects donated by City staff.

4. USE OF PERSONAL COLLECTIONS AT CITY MUSEUMS:

Museum Services staff and volunteers shall not bring their personal objects of museological interest on-site except for donation approval, for display or educational purposes following the execution of a loan agreement, or for comparative study. Personal objects shall not be covered by City insurance, except when a loan agreement has been executed.

5. IMPLEMENTATION:

5.1 Lead Responsibility

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture, or designate, is responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating this policy, and recommending revisions as required from time to time.

5.2 Professional Ethics

The City of Toronto encourages its museum staff and volunteers to abide by the International Council of Museums Code of Professional Ethics and the Ethics Guidelines of the Canadian Museums Association.

Attachment No. 5 –

DEFINITIONS FOR THE HISTORICAL COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY, THE HISTORICAL COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY, THE LIVING HISTORY COLLECTION POLICY AND THE PERSONAL COLLECTIONS POLICY

- a) **“Abandoned Property”** - property left in the custody of Museum Services by a former owner who by their actions demonstrates their intent to relinquish ownership of their property.
- b) **“Accession”** (n) - a set of one or more artifacts, objects, specimens, etc. received from the same source at the same time; an acquisition that a museum has taken ownership of and holds in the public trust as part of the Historical Collection of the City of Toronto.
- c) **“Accession”** (v) - the process of taking legal ownership of an object or set of objects to hold in the public trust.
- d) **“Acquisition”** (n) - something acquired by a museum that may or may not be accessioned into the Historical Collection.
- e) **“Acquisition”** (v) - the process of obtaining custody (physical transfer) of an object or collection.
- f) **“Archaeological Specimen”** - a product of human endeavour or material derived from the natural world, permanently accessioned or under temporary care and keeping, within the Historical Collection of the City of Toronto.
- g) **“Artifact”** - a product of human endeavour, permanently accessioned or under temporary care and keeping, within the Historical Collection of the City of Toronto.
- h) **“Cataloguing”** - the act of documenting registered artifacts by adding expert information to the registration record using standards for describing the artifact or collection. The catalogue record includes all registration information about the object, plus additional descriptive detail and historical context by cross-comparison with other like objects and records.
- i) **“Collection Stewardship”** - the careful, sound and responsible management of collections that are entrusted to care, including the legal, social, and ethical obligations to provide proper storage, management conservation, and care for the collections and associated documentation.
- j) **“Museum Services”** - the City of Toronto administrative unit responsible for the operation and management of museum services, including the Historical Collection and the Living History Collection.

- k) **“Deaccession”** (v) - the formal process of permanently removing an accessioned object or group of objects from the collection.
- l) **“Disposal”** - the means employed by the City of Toronto to permanently divest itself of a deaccessioned artifact from the Historical Collection or an object from the Living History Collection, either through donation, transfer, exchange, sale, return to legal owner or by destruction.
- m) **“Donation”** – the permanent transfer of legal title by means of a gift or bequest of an object (property) to the Historical Collection or Living History Collection of the City of Toronto.
- n) **“Historical Collection”** - a museum-centred assemblage of genuine artifacts produced by human endeavour, archaeological specimens recovered from the ground and specimens derived from the natural world that have been acquired to create a permanent public heritage resource within the City of Toronto.
- o) **“Human Remains”** - a dead human body or portions thereof, including a cremated human body, but does not include portions culturally modified for purposes other than mortuary disposal.
- p) **“Living History Collection”** - a variety of original and replica objects intended to support museum activities as an adjunct to the Historical Collection, but not including props purchased for a single short-term use or other consumables. These objects are not as unique as examples found in the Historical Collection and are not necessarily managed at the same high level of stewardship as the Historical Collection.
- q) **“Living History Object”** - a product of human endeavour and material derived from the natural world, within the Living History Collection of the City of Toronto, and not permanently accessioned or under temporary care and keeping in the Historical Collection.
- r) **“Natural History Specimen”** - material derived from the natural world, permanently accessioned or under temporary care and keeping, within the Historical Collection of the City of Toronto.
- s) **“Loan”** - the temporary assignment of an object or collection of objects to, or from, the City for stated museum purposes, such as exhibition, conservation or research with specific conditions regarding the handling and care of the object, and on the condition that the object is returned by a specified date. This assignment involves no transfer of ownership or title.
- t) **“Object”** – a material or virtual thing of museological interest; in the context of the Historical Collection, an object may be an artifact, an archaeological specimen or a natural history specimen.

- u) **“Object in Custody”** – an object for which the City of Toronto is responsible but where evidence of legal title is unclear or absent.
- v) **“Record”** - the body of evidence or information that the City of Toronto possesses about each of its objects, including descriptive data and information on the objects’ history, plus an account of its acquisition by the City. It may take the form of paper-based or electronic documents.
- w) **“Registration”** - the process of assigning the components of an accession to a unique place in a serial order list of the contents of a collection. This typically involves assigning a control number, an insurance value and a storage or display location to the artifact, as well as recording dimensions, a physical description and photography.
- x) **“Repatriation”** - the formal return of artifacts of cultural patrimony held in the Historical Collection to identifiable lineal descendants of the peoples that created those artifacts historically. Artifacts of cultural patrimony include burial artifacts, sacred artifacts and other artifacts of significant and central historical, traditional or cultural importance to a people.
- y) **“Unclaimed Loan”** – an object for which a loan agreement exists but contact with the lender has lapsed.