

Chapter 4

Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport

New Brunswick Art Bank

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Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport

New Brunswick Art Bank

Introduction

4.1 The report on the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Arts, dated January 1989, included the following comment.

The "image" of a nation or a province need not be confined to some drearily familiar stereotype – lobsters and fiddleheads perhaps (much as we love them) – or a shallow fabrication created at great cost by public relations consultants. ... If our "image" reflects real creativity it persuades and entices; it is deeply appealing and its impact lingers. This is not simply a matter of how others see us. We must learn to see ourselves, to know and appreciate "what is unique in [our] particular corner of the world." Art can give force and clarity to such perceptions. ... The Arts are about depth, about the long-term; they are not dated or disposable.

4.2 The New Brunswick Art Bank is one of the longest standing provincial art banks in Canada, predated by only those in Saskatchewan and Ontario. As of January 2010, it held some 743 artworks created by New Brunswick artists. Along with collections held by the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and the NB Museum, it is one of the largest existing public collections of New Brunswick art, and a valuable cultural and historical asset to the citizens of New Brunswick.

Background

4.3 The Art Bank was established in 1968 as a provincial program to support New Brunswick artists and to serve government by displaying artwork in government buildings. Its mandate, then, is quite similar to the art banks that exist in most other provinces. Other

than a brief mention relating to the acquisition of artworks in Section 3(e) of the *New Brunswick Arts Board Act*, the program is not covered under any provincial legislation. The collection is considered a contemporary collection, meaning that artworks are acquired for the collection within two years of their production. Historical artworks are not eligible for purchase.

4.4 The Art Bank is administered by the Arts Development branch of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport (WCS). The Department's 2006 annual report states:

...the New Brunswick Art Bank ...ensures a record of excellence in the visual arts by acquiring works of art by New Brunswick artists.

4.5 Thus, the Art Bank supports an important aspect of the overall departmental mission and mandate, that being to work with New Brunswickers towards an enriched quality of life through policy development and delivery of services related to community arts development and heritage.

4.6 The Art Bank program is made up of three sub-programs: acquisitions, loans, and exhibitions.

Acquisitions

4.7 The WCS website states that the primary objectives of the acquisitions process are to:

- promote excellence through the acquisition of works of art;
- develop a collection of contemporary works of art by living New Brunswick artists;
- provide support and encouragement for New Brunswick visual artists living and working in this Province. Artists may be in the initial stages of their professional careers, in mid-career, or artists with long-standing reputations;
- make the collection accessible to the public and to public employees through its display in government buildings; and
- make the collection accessible for educational purposes.

4.8 There are a number of reasons why the Art Bank is important to visual artists in the Province. Specifically:

- it raises the profile of the visual arts in the Province;
- it provides artists with remuneration that allows them to continue to create art;

- it increases the reputation of artists with artworks in the Art Bank because their work is part of a major collection; and
- it helps those artists selected for inclusion in the Art Bank to get referrals.

4.9 These last two points serve to increase the potential of future sales by the artist thereby increasing revenue to the New Brunswick visual arts community beyond the amount paid for acquired artworks.

4.10 The juried acquisitions process takes place every two years. Artists must apply and have their artwork approved by a jury of experts before it may be considered for purchase. The jury also recommends to the Department specific artworks to be purchased.

4.11 For the 2009-2010 purchase of artworks, the acquisitions budget was doubled to \$40,000. Prior to that, there had been no change in the \$10,000 per year acquisitions budget (i.e. the amount paid to artists for their artworks) since the program was introduced in 1968. Consequently, before the recent budget increase, the number of artworks that could be purchased for the Art Bank during any one acquisition process had been gradually declining.

4.12 Costs associated with the acquisition process, including jury expenses, transportation, materials, and salaries are borne by WCS through its regular operating budget and have averaged approximately \$10,000 per acquisitions cycle since 2002.

4.13 The most recent acquisitions for the Art Bank were announced in April 2010. Twenty-one works of art were purchased at a cost of approximately \$40,000. Another biannual acquisitions process is scheduled for the fall of 2011.

Loans

4.14 The Arts Development branch promotes the Art Bank as a working collection through the Art Bank loans sub-program. Under this sub-program, artworks are loaned to government departments and agencies for display in various provincial government buildings. Through the loan and exhibition programs, the branch works to meet its program objective of increasing awareness and visibility of New Brunswick visual artists by making the collection accessible to public employees and the public.

4.15 Installation costs associated with the loans program are charged back to the appropriate departments. Administrative costs

associated with administering the loans program, including tracking the inventory of artworks, are funded under the general WCS budget.

Exhibitions

4.16 A further objective of the Art Bank program is to promote the work of New Brunswick artists by making the collection accessible for educational purposes. The Department does this by staging biannual travelling exhibitions within the Province of portions of the collection. Typically, exhibitions are of the newest artworks added to the collection. However, during 2008 and 2009, the Department staged an exhibition entitled “Celebrating 40 Years: New Brunswick Art Bank Anniversary Exhibition” that included older artworks by prominent New Brunswick artists. It has also presented art exhibitions in recent years in Ottawa, Fredericton, Red Bank, and Miramichi.

Rationale for our audit

4.17 Because the Art Bank collection constitutes one of the largest known collections of artworks by prominent past and present New Brunswick artists, and is recognized as a valuable asset to the citizens of the Province of New Brunswick, we believe that it needs to be effectively administered, protected, maintained, and conserved by the Province.

4.18 After preliminary discussions with the Department we determined that, while the acquisitions process appeared to be well controlled and therefore of low risk, there were sufficient risks associated with the ongoing condition of the Art Bank collection to warrant an audit examination on our part. Specifically we were concerned that WCS had no budget to deal with artworks that were identified as needing maintenance or conservation, even though it had determined that many artworks on loan and in storage were in substandard condition. We also had concerns about the security of the collection, given the wide dispersion of the artworks to various government offices.

4.19 Consequently, we determined that it would be of value for our Office to conduct a limited audit of the Art Bank, focusing on the current inventory of artworks in the collection.

Scope

4.20 The objective of our audit was:

To ensure that all art works acquired for the provincial Art Bank can be accounted for and are being adequately protected, maintained and conserved.

4.21 Our audit involved selecting a sample of artworks from database records maintained by the Arts Development branch of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport. We physically inspected selected artworks on loan at various government offices and in storage at Kings Landing. Further, we assessed their condition with the assistance of a departmental staff member. We also held discussions with WCS representatives and performed other procedures as we determined necessary.

Results in brief and conclusion

Audit Area and Criterion	Summary of Audit Findings
<p><u>Management</u> – <i>The NB Art Bank should ensure that adequate controls are in place to manage the inventory of art works.</i></p>	<p>In general we have concluded that sufficient controls are in place to manage the inventory of artworks in the Art Bank collection.</p> <p>However, we have made recommendations to address risks associated with the current Art Bank database and the division of duties between Art Bank staff.</p> <p>We have also recommended that Art Bank staff provide regular reporting on the status of the Art Bank collection to WCS senior management.</p>
<p><u>Protection</u> - <i>The NB Art Bank should ensure that all art works are being adequately protected from theft, and both willful and environmental damage (not in direct sunlight, not in extreme temperatures, etc.).</i></p>	<p>We have concluded that, in general, artworks are adequately protected from theft and damage.</p> <p>A total of 13 artworks could not be accounted for when the existing database and control system was established in 2001. However, there have been no losses since that date.</p>

Audit Area and Criterion	Summary of Audit Findings
<p><u>Conservation</u> - <i>The NB Art Bank should periodically assess the structural stability and extent of any physical deterioration of art works, and perform appropriate conservation treatments as required on a timely basis.</i></p>	<p>We have concluded that Art Bank staff does regularly assess the conservation needs of artworks in the collection. However, required conservation treatment is not carried out in many cases due to a lack of resources, resulting in many artworks in the collection being in jeopardy.</p> <p>We have therefore recommended the Department determine if the current program objective of accumulating and maintaining a permanent collection of the work of New Brunswick visual artists continues to be an achievable goal, or whether it should be altered in recognition of the limited resources available to the Art Bank. If the goal is still considered appropriate, WCS should allocate adequate funding to the Art Bank to allow all artworks to be maintained in good condition on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p><u>Maintenance</u> - <i>The NB Art Bank should ensure that any required maintenance of art works (reframing, cleaning, etc.) is completed on a timely basis.</i></p>	<p>We have concluded that Art Bank staff does regularly assess the maintenance needs of artworks in the collection. However, required maintenance work is not carried out in many cases due to a lack of resources, resulting in many artworks in the collection being at risk of incurring more extensive damage.</p>
<p><u>Other</u> – No criterion</p>	<p>We have recommended that Art Bank staff consider and, where feasible, implement other options for increasing the public exposure of the collection.</p> <p>We have also recommended that WCS present performance information for the Art Bank in its annual report.</p>

Conclusion

4.22 Based upon our findings, we have concluded that all artworks in the collection can be accounted for and are being adequately protected. However, we have also concluded that, as a working collection which is on display at all times, artworks in the collection are not being adequately maintained and conserved due to a lack of

funding available to complete needed work. Consequently the overall condition of the collection is lower than should be expected of a permanent collection, and this should be of concern to legislators and the public.

Condition of artworks

4.23 The Art Bank database listed a total of 756 artworks as of January 2010. Of those a departmental representative indicated that 743 are currently in the collection and the other 13 are either missing or were never purchased. The fact that 13 artworks could not be accounted for was discovered in 2001 when the entire collection was surveyed, photographed and the current database was developed. An additional 33 artworks by Acadian artists that were once a part of the collection were de-accessioned and transferred to the Université de Moncton a number of years ago.

4.24 Artworks included in the Art Bank are classified into three separate categories based upon their condition in order to determine which of them are in need of maintenance and/or conservation work.

1. Good - Good condition implies the artwork, frame and hanging devices are in good condition.
2. Fair - Fair condition implies that the mat, frame, backing and/or hanging devices must be replaced as they threaten the condition of the work. However, the medium (i.e. materials used to create the actual artwork) appears not to be affected. Frequent problems include acidic backing, disjointed frames, and buckling and warped matts.
3. Poor – Poor implies that the artwork is fragile, the medium has been impacted and the artwork is jeopardized.

4.25 We selected a total of 33 records from the Art Bank database for testing. All selected artworks were found in the locations indicated in the database. Locations of artworks in our test sample included various government departments and agencies, as well as the storage facility at Kings Landing where artworks not currently on loan are kept. Exhibit 4.1 shows the relative condition of the 33 artworks at the time of our examination in early 2009.

Exhibit 4.1 Condition of sample artworks examined

Condition	Sample items	Percentage of sample
Good	7	21.2%
Fair	20	60.6%
Poor	6	18.2%
Total	33	100.0%

4.26 The primary reason that we evaluated the majority of our test items as being in fair condition was because their frames were in need of repair or acidic materials originally used for mats and backing need to be replaced.

4.27 In conjunction with our audit, we asked the Department for their assessment of the condition of the collection. This information was provided in January 2010 based on their assessment of individual artworks examined over the past few years and is shown in the second column below. The third column shows our projection of the condition of the collection based upon the percentages in each classification of condition from our sample testing.

Exhibit 4.2 Comparative projection of condition of art bank collection

Condition of artwork	Departmental assessment of condition	Number projected from our test results
Good	474	158
Fair	212	450
Poor	57	135
Total	743	743

4.28 As can be seen by comparing columns two and three in Exhibit 4.2, there are significant differences between our projection and the assessment provided by the Department. We would note that we were assisted by an Art Bank staff member in making our determinations of condition. Condition descriptions in the Art Bank database records were, for the most part, based upon examinations conducted well before our work.

4.29 When asked about a possible explanation for these differences, a departmental representative indicated that because it is a working collection with most artwork on display at all times in non-museum conditions, condition of the collection is more vulnerable to deterioration than a similar collection belonging to a museum or art gallery. The described condition of many works fluctuates as

framing materials deteriorate, as artworks continue to be on long-term display and as Art Bank staff receives more current information about conservation standards.

4.30 Because they are based on a more recent examination of artworks, our figures appear to indicate that the condition of the collection is deteriorating. And both sets of figures indicated that a substantial number of artworks are jeopardized and in need of conservation work (i.e. in poor condition) or in need of maintenance (i.e. in fair condition). It is also apparent that overall condition of the collection is generally lower than should reasonably be expected for a collection that is intended to be permanent in nature.

4.31 The collection appears to be at a point where all artwork should be assessed for conservation issues and a conservation program to correct deficiencies should be put in place. In fact, a conservator at the NB Museum has recommended to the Department that a professional conservator conduct a conservation survey of the entire collection in order to get a better idea of actual conservation needs related to the collection.

Administration of the loans program

4.32 The Art Bank, including the loans program, has been administered by one part-time manager (the Art Bank Coordinator) and one part-time staff member who performs technical duties such as the installation of artworks. However, as of April 2010, the Art Bank Coordinator will be assigned a full-time role focusing exclusively on visual arts programs, meaning that more time will be available to administer the Art Bank program.

4.33 A number of guidelines have been established covering the process for loaning artworks to departments and agencies. Specifically:

1. Artwork can only be loaned for use in the offices of a Minister, Deputy Minister, Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Director or CEO, or in an Executive Reception Area or Boardroom.
2. Artwork must be installed only where light levels are not above accepted limits, and where humidity is constant and not above accepted limits.
3. Artwork must not be installed near heating or air conditioning units or any other place where it may be damaged.

4. Artwork must be placed in areas where staff members are typically present to safeguard its security (i.e. no entryways, hallways, or reception areas where there is no dedicated personnel).
5. Artwork must be handled (i.e. installed, moved, or removed) only by Art Bank staff.
6. Any loss, damage, or deterioration of loaned artworks must be reported immediately to the Art Bank Coordinator by the borrowing department or agency.
7. Costs of installation and maintenance associated with the damage, theft or loss of borrowed artworks are to be borne by the borrowing department (i.e. costs are charged back to the appropriate department).
8. Departments are required to sign a loan agreement for each artwork they borrow from the Art Bank.

4.34 The Art Bank Coordinator provides a guidelines document to departments upon their first request to borrow artwork.

4.35 During our work we noted two areas of risk associated with the administration of the Art Bank.

1. The current Art Bank database uses Filemaker Pro, a systems tool which is used by many museums in the Province. Information technology support for the Department is provided by the Department of Education, however, that Department does not support Filemaker Pro. The Art Bank database system is currently considered a low priority for replacement within the Department of Education. A system failure could lead to significant disruption of Art Bank operations, potentially putting artworks at risk.
2. At present the Art Bank Coordinator is responsible for entering information into the database and also has physical access to the collection. As a result, there is a risk of internal misappropriation of artworks. This risk is common within small operations.

4.36 We also noted that there is no regular internal reporting to senior management within the Department about operations or results achieved by the Art Bank. Without such information, management

cannot readily assess the continued relevance, cost-effectiveness, and success of the program in achieving its goals. Such reporting may also help senior management better understand Art Bank resourcing needs given the current condition of the collection.

Recommendations

4.37 We recommended risks associated with the security of the Art Bank database be addressed.

4.38 We recommended WCS take steps to eliminate the risk associated with the lack of division of duties identified above. One option might be for someone other than the Art Bank Coordinator to be given responsibility for entering information into the Art Bank database.

4.39 We recommended Art Bank staff provide regular reporting on the status of the Art Bank collection to WCS senior management.

Departmental response

4.40 *In May 2010, the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport undertook a short-term contract with a service provider to develop and implement a web-based application for the Art Bank's database. The improvements to the functioning of the database requiring an investment of \$20,000 will allow multiple system administrators. The improvements align with adopted best practices and application development models for government. As well as replacing a database program that was inefficient and difficult to maintain, the database upgrades will ensure that more than one person can be tasked with secure data entry for the NB Art Bank.*

4.41 *A reporting system will be put in place to ensure that regular reporting on the performance of the Art Bank takes place with Wellness, Culture and Sport senior management.*

Protection of artworks

4.42 One of the major concerns we identified in our preliminary planning for this audit related to the security of the collection, especially given the wide dispersion of the artworks to various government offices. Artworks in the collection need to be protected from damage and theft.

4.43 The Department does take steps to ensure the protection of artworks. In particular:

- It has established and enforces guidelines for the loans program as previously discussed. In particular, restricting installation and

movement of artwork to Art Bank staff allows for appropriate art preparation, condition reporting, and the checking of climate control in proposed display areas in government offices.

- It ensures that the most valuable artworks are either stored securely or are on loan in more secure locations.
- It ensures that access to database records is limited, making it more difficult for potential thieves to locate valuable artworks.
- Artworks not on loan are stored at the Kings Landing Collection Centre, which is considered to be a secure and climate controlled facility.
- It conducts a full inventory count every two years. Inventory counts were implemented in 2001 in conjunction with the development of the database. The inventory count is conducted by the part-time technical staff member in conjunction with an established contact person in each borrowing department or agency. It includes ensuring the artwork is in the location specified in the Art Bank database. It also includes assessing the condition of the artwork and preparing updated information that the Art Bank Coordinator inputs into the database. Digitized images of every artwork in the collection are maintained in the database, thereby facilitating the identification of particular artworks in the field. A departmental representative indicated that inventory counts typically do not find major problems. Occasionally a piece of art may have been moved within an office, but as mentioned previously there are only 13 artworks that cannot be accounted for, and none since 2001. Given current resourcing levels, it takes a full year to complete each inventory count.

4.44 Further, the Department feels the fact that the artworks are widely dispersed mitigates against a major loss through either theft or environmental damage.

4.45 During our testing in government offices we noted that for the most part artworks were well protected in secure, environmentally-appropriate locations. We noted two exceptions that appear to be isolated in nature and not indicative of any systemic problems. In one case an artwork was placed directly over a photocopier, the heat from which could have caused damage. In the other case, no-one was present in the area where an artwork was displayed.

4.46 We also visited the Kings Landing Collection Centre to observe the storage conditions for artworks not currently on loan. This amounts to about 15 percent of the collection, in excess of 100 artworks in total. All artworks are locked in a secure room in the Center to which only one staff member has a key. Security is present on site during off hours. The temperature and humidity in the storage room is controlled and kept at acceptable levels. However, due to space limitations, artworks are primarily stacked side by side. Therefore, because some artworks are not securely wrapped, the risk of damage exists. A departmental representative indicated that the Art Bank and the Heritage Branch of WCS, which manages the building, are exploring the possibility of a separate storage area in the building for the Art Bank.

4.47 During our audit, a departmental representative indicated that the Art Bank collection is not covered by third-party insurance. It is “self-insured” as is common for many other government assets. Further, Art Bank holdings have never been independently appraised to determine their value, although this information may be of limited value given that the collection is permanent in nature (i.e. artworks are not ever expected to be sold) and self-insured.

4.48 A departmental report prepared internally in November 2006 estimated the approximate market value of the 710 artworks held at that time to be in the range of \$3 million. This establishes that the risk of a financial loss to the Province does exist in the case where artworks are lost or stolen. The financial risk would be highest in association with the artworks of the most prominent artists held in the collection, as these may have significant market value. As previously noted, however, the wide dispersion of the collection among various government offices does serve to mitigate the risk of a large loss of artworks.

Recommendation

4.49 We recommended Art Bank staff ensure that storage space at Kings Landing is adequate and that all artworks are appropriately protected while in storage there.

Departmental response

4.50 *The collection centre is managed in partnership with Heritage Branch, Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport, and Kings Landing. A separate storage area for the Art Bank will be explored with the building’s partners in conjunction with the Department of Supply and Services in order to enclose an area on the main level of the building for storage of artwork. The storage area would require storage systems for works of art in various media,*

while ensuring proper environmental conditions (humidity and temperature controls) and security.

4.51 *While no estimate for the cost of implementing a dedicated storage space at the Collection Centre is available, the department will work with Kings Landing and Supply and Services on identifying the feasibility of options to address concerns.*

Maintenance and conservation of artworks

4.52 The New Brunswick Art Bank collection is a working collection which is on display at all times. This means that maintenance and conservation needs associated with the collection would be considerably higher than for a museum collection where artworks are typically in storage most of the time.

4.53 As mentioned previously, the Art Bank technical staff person assesses the condition of each artwork in conjunction with their regular duties as well as during the bi-annual inventory count and these assessments are entered into the database. As is detailed in Exhibit 4.2, the Department has indicated that a number of artworks in the Art Bank collection are in substandard condition. As to the exact number of artworks requiring maintenance or conservation work, a departmental representative cautioned:

Artwork in the collection is examined by Art Bank staff on an ongoing basis and rated for its level of condition based on obvious conservation issues. However, inspection by a specialist conservator may result in finding more profound conservation issues, especially with artworks identified in fair or good condition.

4.54 Our testing confirmed that many artworks are in fair or poor condition. Those artworks in fair condition are considered in need of maintenance which may include replacing frames, mattes and non-acidic backing, and glazing to reduce environmental impacts on the artwork. Those artworks in poor condition require conservation work which is much more costly, and requires that professional conservators be hired.

4.55 The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) states on their website:

Conservators are responsible for the long-term preservation of artistic and cultural artifacts. They do this by analyzing and assessing the condition of cultural

property, understanding processes and evidence of deterioration, planning collections care or site management strategies that prevent damage, carrying out conservation treatments, and conducting research in all of the areas previously indicated.

4.56 The Department indicated that conservators accessible to the Art Bank include:

- the Provincial Conservator at the Conservation Lab at the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville;
- conservators at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick; and
- the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa, although it has a long waiting list.

4.57 Occasionally an outside gallery requests the loan of artworks from the Art Bank for exhibition, and in exchange offers to provide free conservation treatment on the artworks it borrows. Otherwise however, conservation treatment typically costs \$100 per day from each of the providers listed above. The Fine Art Conservation Program offered by another branch of WCS will cover up to 50% of the cost of conservation of artworks performed by the Provincial Conservator with some limits.

4.58 Unfortunately, the Art Bank has no budget allocation to cover the cost of maintenance or conservation of artworks in the collection. Recognizing this lack of resources, a departmental representative stated:

In the past few years, new acquisitions have been closely examined by Art Bank staff prior to the jury process to ascertain as much as possible that artwork purchased for the Art Bank will not require conservation in the near future. In February 2010, a conservation specialist with the NB Museum will prepare condition reports on applications to the 2009-2010 Acquisition Program. If necessary, new acquisitions will be brought up to conservation standards from the Art Bank administration budget.

4.59 In the absence of needed funding for maintenance and conservation work, we believe that the condition of the collection will continue to deteriorate and that consequently the provincial goal

of ensuring “a record of excellence in the visual arts” will not be achieved.

4.60 We requested that the Department provide us with an estimate of funding required to bring all artworks in the collection to good condition, and to maintain them at that condition level. The Department responded:

To determine an accurate estimate to bring the entire collection to good condition requires a thorough conservation study of all artwork by a specialist.

4.61 However with that disclaimer, the Department did provide the following estimates:

- To do necessary maintenance work to bring artwork in fair condition to good condition would cost approximately \$6,000. (Note that this figure was developed in 2005 based on 190 artworks in fair condition. The Department’s most current estimate is that there are 212 artworks in that condition.)
- To do necessary conservation work to bring 57 artworks currently in poor condition to good condition would cost approximately \$57,000 (i.e. 57 artworks x \$100/day x 10 days).

4.62 This does not include the additional annual amount that would need to be added to the existing \$70,000 per annum administration budget to maintain all artworks in the collection in good condition on an ongoing basis. It is also based on existing condition descriptions in the Art Bank database, which based upon our test results may be overstated.

Recommendation

4.63 We recommended the Department determine if the current program objective of accumulating and maintaining a permanent collection of the work of New Brunswick visual artists continues to be an achievable goal, or whether it should be altered in recognition of the limited resources available to the Art Bank. If the goal is still considered appropriate, WCS should allocate adequate funding to the Art Bank to allow all artworks to be maintained in good condition on an ongoing basis.

Departmental response

4.64 *In order to bring to “good condition” all artwork in the Art Bank, the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport is exploring a partnership with the NB Museum to implement a practicum or residency by a university student specializing in conservation studies.*

As part of the work plan, the student will undertake a conservation survey of all artwork in the Art Bank; the NB Museum will provide the opportunity for laboratory work in conservation as part of the practicum. Once a thorough survey of the collection has been undertaken, a conservation program can be implemented.

4.65 *The estimate for conservation of all artwork not in good condition is approximately \$65,000. This expense is an investment in the cultural heritage of New Brunswick and one that the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport will undertake with support from funding partners and from existing program funding over the next few years.*

4.66 *Currently, the Art Bank is working with the Provincial Conservator and the NB Archives on conservation of several valuable artworks in the Art Bank. The conservation work will be completed by fall 2010 and represents an investment of approximately \$2,000.*

4.67 *The Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) is undertaking a survey of the Centennial Building murals, part of the Art Bank collection, as part of the process to protect them during upcoming renovations. The Art Bank is also working with CCI to restore an important mixed media artwork by Claude Roussel.*

4.68 *These initiatives illustrate the commitment of the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport to upgrade the condition of artwork in the Art Bank and to take advantage of partnerships in conservation expertise.*

Other issues

4.69 During the course of our audit we noted two other issues that we feel are significant enough to be raised in this chapter.

4.70 First, we feel that current public exposure of the collection may not be sufficient to meet the stated goal of the loans program

[to increase] accessibility and visibility of New Brunswick visual artists represented in the Art Bank.

4.71 The Art Bank does hold bi-annual public traveling exhibitions of newly acquired art works, however, aside from the recent 40th Anniversary Exhibition, there have been only a limited number of exhibitions of previously-acquired artworks from the collection. For the most part, older artworks are only displayed for public viewing in

limited areas within government offices through the loans program. There is no budget dedicated to an ongoing exhibition program for the Art Bank.

4.72 Other options that may be considered to meet the goal may include:

- creating an Art Bank website that includes images and other information pertaining to artists and artworks represented in the collection. In order to implement this option, we understand that there are significant copyright concerns associated with presenting images publicly that would need to be addressed;
- increasing the number of exhibitions of Art Bank artworks; and
- including previously-acquired artworks as part of future exhibitions.

4.73 The Department has already investigated the option of instituting a rental program targeting private sector borrowers such as corporations and other institutions to increase public exposure of the collection. However, based on the experiences of other jurisdictions and other factors, the option has been rejected.

4.74 Secondly, we noted in our review of WCS annual reports that no performance information is presented in them that would allow legislators or the public to assess the extent to which the Art Bank program is relevant, cost-effective, and successful in achieving its goals. Information available publicly relates solely to new acquisitions and public exhibitions of artworks from the collection.

Recommendation

4.75 We recommended Art Bank staff consider and, where feasible, implement other options for increasing the public exposure of the collection.

Departmental response

4.76 *The Art Bank is continuing to expand its biannual exhibition program to reach communities in the province through the Conseil provincial des sociétés culturelles (CPSC) as well as communities with new cultural infrastructure, such as the Centre des arts et de la culture in Dieppe. This means that the exhibition program will be presented in at least 10 communities from 2010 to 2012, with two new communities (Bathurst, Dieppe) participating in the program. As well, small exhibitions will continue to be presented, such as the*

exhibition in March 2010 at NBCC Miramichi that highlighted mixed media to web design students at the college.

4.77 As part of the Art Bank database upgrades currently in process, a search page is being added to the Art Bank site at www.gnb.ca/culture to provide visitors with the opportunity to search the collection. Because of the ongoing cost for digital rights with artists, at this time images of the artworks will be not presented. However, the Department is exploring the issue of digital reproduction rights with other art banks in Canada, including the Canada Council Art Bank.

4.78 The Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport has proposed a partnership with Service NB to present a digital exhibition of artworks in the Art Bank at Service NB centres throughout the province. Projects such as this will create greater visibility for the work of New Brunswick artists in the Art Bank.

Recommendation

4.79 We recommended WCS present performance information for the Art Bank in its annual report.

Departmental response

4.80 Efforts will be made to include performance information about the Art Bank in the Department's Annual Report.