

CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title: **City of Waterloo Museum – Conservation Policy**
Policy Category: **Administration Policy**
Policy No.: A-020
Department: Community Services
Approval Date: January 11, 2016
Revision Date: N/A
Author: Karen VandenBrink, Museum and Collections Manager/Curator
Attachments: N/A
Related Documents/Legislation: N/A
Key Word(s): Museum, conservation

POLICY STATEMENT:

Museums and other heritage preservation organizations are founded on the existence of object collections, and other records of cultural experiences. The City of Waterloo Museum is responsible for and committed to the safeguarding of objects, archival material and other cultural experiences that make up the collection of the Museum, along with any other objects loaned to the Museum, or otherwise in its care.

It follows that the conservation of this heritage should be a high priority. The cultural property entrusted to the Corporation of the City of Waterloo should be passed along to future generations in the best possible condition. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Museum to ensure that the cultural property be properly stored, cared for, exhibited and interpreted.

The Museum's mission is:

The City of Waterloo Museum serves as a community gathering place where residents and visitors celebrate their stories, both local and global, which are unique to the City's growth and evolution. Through its collections, exhibitions, volunteers, staff and programs, the Museum interprets the fabric of our past and points the way to its future.

Mandatory Policy, <i>Municipal Act</i>:	No
Policy Administration Team, Review Date	December 9, 2015
Corporate Management Team, Review Date	December 16, 2015

PURPOSE:

This policy indicates what the City, the Museum, its staff and volunteers will do as stewards of the collections. This is to ensure long-term preservation of the collections so that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy and learn from them.

In its conservation activities the Museum, its staff and volunteers will be consistent with established professional standards as indicated in the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario, and ethics as presented in the Canadian Museums Association Code of Ethics.

DEFINITIONS:

City: Corporation of the City of Waterloo.

Conservation: The application of science to the examination, maintenance and treatment of artifacts or specimens. Its principal aim is to stabilize artifacts and specimens in their present state. It encompasses both preventive conservation and conservation treatments.

Conservation treatments: Involves interventions causing changes in the physical properties or structure of the objects.

Cultural property: The objects, archival material entrusted to the Corporation of the City of Waterloo.

Museum: The City of Waterloo Museum, as an institution, including its collection and its staff.

Preventive conservation: Consists of non-intrusive actions taken to slow or stop deterioration and to prevent damage.

Restoration: Involves the removal or modification of existing material, or the addition of new material in order to reinstate earlier known aesthetic, historical or scientific values.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to City Council, staff and volunteers, as they are involved in administration, management, and operation of the City of Waterloo Museum.

This policy applies to all objects in the Museum's collection, as well as all objects on loan to the Museum or otherwise entrusted to the Museum on a temporary basis.

POLICY COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated by:

- posting on the City of Waterloo website
- posting on the City of Waterloo intranet accessible to staff
- sharing with relevant stakeholder/collaborators
- providing training to staff and volunteers

POLICY:

1.0 General Statements

Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining the security of the collection. This includes protection from damage, deterioration or loss.

Trained staff will establish and maintain optimal environmental standards in conditions of storage, display, use and handling of the collection.

Trained staff will provide safe and secure environments that will not contribute to deterioration of artifacts on display and in storage.

The City will provide secure and environmentally secure exhibitions by providing and maintaining the necessary equipment, facilities and supplies to achieve this.

2.0 Conservation Measures and Procedures

While all staff members have the duty to ensure the long-term preservation of the collection, primary responsibility lies with the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator.

The Museum and Collections Manager/Curator will determine which conservation measures are appropriate for a given object in the collection. Decision-making will consider that preventive conservation provides the most effective use of resources for preservation of the collection. Preventative conservation treatments will be the preferred approach to conservation of the collection. When preventative conservation treatments are not appropriate, conservation treatments will be the preferred approach. Restoration treatments will only be used when preventative conservation and conservation treatments cannot be used.

In the application of conservation measures, the permanent collection will take priority over the education collection. The Museum maintains a working collection of artifacts and specimens for use in public and school programs. These may be operated or handled by staff, volunteers or the public. They may be copies, reproductions or duplicates.

Within the permanent collection, priority for conservation will be given to artifacts in the following categories, in the following order:

1. Those objects requiring emergency treatment of stabilization.
2. Those objects considered to be of particular historic or artistic significance.
3. Those objects required for exhibition.
4. Those objects required for education programming.
5. All other objects owned by the Corporation of the City of Waterloo.
6. Objects not directly owned by the Corporation of the City of Waterloo, such as loans.

Definitions and conservation practices shall be in accordance with the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators' "Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice."

The Museum will not accession into its collection any object that:

- will create a hazard or condition which would be injurious to the existing collection;
- cannot be safely cared for due to its material or physical make-up; or
- cannot be reasonably conserved due to its nature or present condition.

The Museum will de-accession an object, in accordance with the Collections Policy, that:

- may create a hazard or condition which would be injurious to the existing collection;
- cannot be safely cared for due to its material or physical make-up; or
- cannot be reasonably conserved due to its nature or present condition.

3.0 Conservation Treatments

The Museum and Collections Manager/Curator will establish the necessity for the conservation treatment to an object.

- All physical interventions, whether to an artifact or structure, will be based on sufficient research to identify and safeguard the historical values concerned.
- The history and evidence of past use of the item will be respected.
- Contributions from all periods of the item's existence will be taken into account when deciding the appropriate level of intervention.
- Any physical intervention will be fully documented, including the reason for it, what the intervention was, who performed it, and when it was carried out.
- The Museum and Collections Manager/Curator will make recommendations about treatments that consider scheduling of work and extent of treatment. Conservation and restoration treatments will follow a course of minimal intervention in the fabric of the object.
- Museum staff shall only carry out conservation treatments that are within the limits of their professional competence and facilities. In cases where there is

inadequate staff knowledge, training and/or equipment, outside professional assistance will be sought.

- Any treatments will only be carried out in a separate space which is ventilated according to health and safety standards.
- Whenever possible, reversible techniques and materials will be used in treatments or when any physical change is made to an object, including the attachment of accession or catalogue numbers, or mounting for display.
- Restorations will be historically accurate, while not being deceptive as to originality.
- Restorations will be easily detectable, although not necessarily conspicuous.

4.0 Condition Reports

- Staff who complete condition reports must be trained in proper condition reporting procedure.
- Trained staff will examine and record condition details of an object prior to assessment for treatment.
- All treatments will be carefully documented.
- Condition and treatment reports shall be maintained as permanent records within the Museum.

5.0 Proper Care and Handling

The Museum will protect the collection through proper care and handling by:

- Providing training for all staff in the care and handling of artifacts.
- Ensuring staff members who have physical access to the collection use appropriate care and handling techniques.
- Instructing all staff and volunteers with access to the collection in how to safely handle artifacts, and in procedures for safe packing, unpacking and transportation of objects.
- Limiting physical access to the collection. Non-staff members will not have physical access to the collection (i.e. storage areas or display cases) without being accompanied by a staff member with the appropriate training. Any staff member who provides physical access to the collection to a non-staff member is responsible for ensuring that the person understands and agrees to use appropriate care and handling techniques.
- Ensuring artifacts are durable enough for proposed use (display, interpretation, loan, hands-on activities).

6.0 Storage

Separate storage space(s) will be provided for the collection. Storage space(s) will be used for collection storage only and will be large enough to store artifacts without crowding. Storage space will accommodate anticipated growth of the collection, or

additional storage space will be acquired before any significant additions are made to the collection.

All storage materials, shelving and mounting techniques will meet current standards for the environmental and physical safety of the cultural heritage property being stored.

Artifacts will be stored according to material type, and storage areas will only be illuminated when in use by staff.

Storage areas will only be accessed by the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator and designated staff. Others will only be permitted within storage areas under the supervision of the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator or designated staff.

The Museum and Collections Manager/Curator is responsible for establishing a regular schedule of cleaning by trained staff.

7.0 Security

Access to storage areas is restricted by the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator to designated staff. Others will only be allowed into storage areas under the supervision of the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator or designated staff.

The Museum will maintain an appropriate security system with alarms and cameras to protect artifacts from theft or vandalism.

All alarm systems and related equipment will be maintained and monitored on a regular, on-going scheduled basis.

The Museum will meet all local and provincial fire regulations and conform to all firearms regulations and other relevant legislation.

The Museum will maintain a disaster plan and a program of staff training to ensure readiness for emergencies.

8.0 Environment

The Museum will provide an appropriate environment for storage and exhibition of the collection by:

- reducing visible light to accepted standards
- removing all ultraviolet radiation
- maintaining relative humidity and temperature levels within an appropriate range for museum artifacts
- reducing dust and pollution through a combination of physical plant and preventative procedures
- regular cleaning and maintenance by appropriately trained staff

- regular inspections for pests will be carried out by a contracted pest control company. The pest control company will provide any needed remediation. Pest control will also involve isolating incoming objects proposed for donation in the artifact holding area that are inspected for infestation. Non-collection material, such as exhibit props, will also be inspected
- regular checking and recording of environment conditions with follow up to correct deficiencies

9.0 Loans

Incoming loans will be afforded the same protection as the permanent collection and will be fully insured under the City's fine arts floater policy, unless other arrangements are undertaken by the lender.

Outgoing loans will be approved by the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator and will be subject to condition reporting. Outgoing loans will not occur unless the City of Waterloo Museum can ensure that all objects will be protected from damage in transit and provided with environmental conditions at the borrowing institution at least consistent with those provided by the Museum. When necessary, the Museum and Collections Manager/Curator will require a City of Waterloo Museum Borrowing Institution Facility report to be completed.

The Museum and Collections Manager/Curator is responsible for establishing and implementing safe packing, unpacking and transportation procedures related to loans.

10.0 External/Public Inquiries on Conservation

The Museum will not normally give out conservation treatment advice as a result of a public inquiry. Conservation advice for public inquiries will be limited to preventive measures. When the information is within the area of professional expertise of the adviser, exceptions may be made for the following circumstances:

- It can be reasonably ascertained that the person can carry out the treatment in a competent and ethical manner.
- The inquiry comes as the result of an emergency situation.

The Museum will not carry out conservation treatments for the public. Exceptions may be made for the following circumstances:

- In response to an emergency situation.
- Whenever possible, the Museum will cooperate with other heritage institutions and levels of government in matters relating to conservation and preservation.

REVIEW

The policy shall be reviewed by staff every three years and shall be updated as required.

COMPLIANCE

In cases of policy violation, the City may investigate and determine appropriate corrective action.