



30 August 2026

Greetings to ACO members, volunteers, and supporters,

Thank you for being part of the ACO community. As we continue our work to protect Ontario's heritage, I want to share an important update about how ACO is evolving to strengthen both our provincial mission and the local heritage efforts you care about. This message is intended to bring you up to date as we move through this transition together.

As members and supporters of the Architectural Conservancy Ontario (ACO), you share a deep commitment to protecting the historic places, cultural landscapes, and architectural legacies that define our province. This shared passion has shaped ACO for nearly a century, and it continues to guide us as we enter a period of thoughtful and necessary change.

For many years, ACO has worked to balance branch independence, a strong provincial vision, and responsible financial stewardship. Today, these priorities are more important than ever. To ensure ACO remains resilient, effective, and true to its mission, we are realigning our organizational structure so we can better support our volunteers, strengthen our advocacy, and safeguard Ontario's heritage for generations to come.

What has not changed - and will never change - is what ACO stands for. Our mission remains at the heart of everything we do. Ontario's heritage belongs to all of us. It must be protected, celebrated, and passed forward with pride.

Since the 1980s, ACO's branches have operated under ACO's charitable charter. However, evolving legislative requirements, including CRA audit obligations, have significantly affected our financial sustainability. Despite moving to a virtual operation and making difficult staffing decisions, cost-cutting alone is no longer sufficient to maintain a stable future.

Over the past 18 months, we have engaged in consultations with board directors, members, branch executives, and volunteers across the province. Together, we reflected on our history, our strengths, and what our members value most. We also examined what must be in place for ACO to thrive as we approach our 100th anniversary in 2033.

From these conversations, several priorities emerged. Our future structure must support:

- Long-term financial sustainability

Mailing address:
38 Fitzgibbon Ave., Scarborough, On M1K 3Z9
Charitable # 108071556 RR0001
T 416-367-8075

info@acontario.ca

The past, Our present, Your future.

- Inclusion and respect for existing branches
- Opportunities for growth
- A representative governance model
- The ability to deliver ACO's mission effectively
- ACO Branch funds at close-out will be dedicated for ACO-compatible projects and activities in the community where the funds were raised

In response, ACO's Transition Team developed a recommendation that was endorsed by the entire Board of Directors including Branch Presidents in April 2026. This new "hybrid model" introduces two pathways for participation:

Associates: Designed for smaller branches and emerging community groups, the Associate pathway means groups can focus on local heritage action without the administrative burden of financial management. Provincial operations will provide financial oversight and support. The Clarington, Muskoka, and Windsor-Essex branches have chosen this pathway and will continue to operate in their communities under ACO's charitable charter. Members in each of these communities will see little change in how their local heritage activities continue.

Affiliates: Building on ACO's federated tradition, Affiliates will operate as independent, incorporated not-for-profit organizations. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, Affiliates remain connected to ACO while assuming responsibility for their own financial and legislative obligations under ONCA and CRA requirements. The Cobourg & East Northumberland, Port Hope, Toronto, Stratford-Perth County, London Region, South Bruce Grey, Hamilton, and North Waterloo Region Branches are closing this fall. This marks a significant moment in ACO's history, as each of these communities begins the process of determining how best to carry forward their heritage work. Many are already forming new independent organizations - or strengthening existing ones - that may become Affiliates of ACO, continuing to share ACO's purpose, mission, and commitment to protecting Ontario's built heritage, special places, and landscapes.

As this transition unfolds, we recognize that each branch community is unique - shaped by its own history, volunteers, and local heritage priorities. Communities will organize in ways that best suit their local environment. Some may move quickly to establish new not-for-profit organizations, while others may take more time to build community capacity. Each community will move at its own pace, guided by what is right for its people and its heritage.

We also recognize that ACO represents a crucial voice of advocacy for heritage at the Provincial level, which is needed more than ever. This change will allow ACO to remain focused on championing heritage at the level where policy is legislated through initiatives like the past extension of the listing expiry for 2 years and more recently the Heritage Helping Housing Grant.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of every volunteer, member, board director, and former staff member who has contributed to ACO's work. Your time, passion, and perseverance have shaped our organization—one building, one landscape, and one campaign at a time. This transition is challenging, but it is also an opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable ACO.

Mailing address:

38 Fitzgibbon Ave., Scarborough, On M1K 3Z9
T 416-367-8075 Charitable # 108071556 RR0001

This transition also entrusts ACO's Board of Directors with critical work. Over the coming months, the Board will support branch communities through the transition period, facilitate the careful untangling of branch operations from provincial systems, and ensure that all obligations are met with clarity and respect. At the same time, the Board will be developing the tools, processes, and governance practices required to manage a new organizational structure—one that is sustainable, mission-aligned, and capable of carrying ACO confidently past its 100th birthday.

With our shared commitment to heritage conservation, I invite you to join me in re-imagining ACO through its new Associate and Affiliate models.

The ACO Board of Directors will be reaching out soon to seek your ideas, involvement, and advice. In the meantime, please contact me directly if you wish to participate in this historic transition.

Together, we will ensure that ACO remains a powerful, united voice for Ontario's heritage—today and for the next century.

Warm regards,

Deb Crawford
Chair, ACO Board of Directors
Email: president@acountario.ca

Mailing address:
38 Fitzgibbon Ave., Scarborough, On M1K 3Z9
T 416-367-8075 Charitable # 108071556 RR0001