

# ACO Questions – Ontario Liberal Party Leadership Candidates – 2023

1 November 2023

Recognizing Ontario's municipalities are the key players in preserving the rich built heritage of this province, Liberal governments have historically worked closely and constructively with municipalities on **policies and legislation to strengthen local decisions on heritage conservation within a provincial framework.**

In recent years many of these laws and policies have been dismantled or weakened.

## 1. Do you support the changes Bill 23 made to the Ontario Heritage Act?

### Background:

Bill 23 made it much harder to protect what communities value and treasure. Two striking examples: a) because eligibility for heritage designation has been restricted (requiring two criteria for heritage value be met instead of one, contrary to international norms), many sites valued by Black, Indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ citizens are almost impossible to protect; b) because of a new 2-year limit on listing properties on municipal registers, municipalities' listing powers (which gives 60-day protection from demolition) are hamstrung; over **32,000** listed properties must be designated by January 1, 2025 or lose protection and risk demolition.

### Questions:

What is your opinion of these, and other changes Bill 23 made to the Ontario Heritage Act?

Would your government move to reverse these changes?

## 2: Do you support the proposed changes to the Provincial Policy Statement?

### Background

One of the most important guides to municipal planning decisions is the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The draft 2023 Provincial Planning Statement, [<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-6813>] following on Bill 23's changes to the Ontario Heritage Act, proposes a number of changes that dismiss and discourage a reuse and refurbish approach.

a. ACO recommends that the current language of policy 2.6.3 be retained — "significant cultural heritage resources shall be conserved" — instead of the much narrower language of the proposed PPS where only "protected heritage resources shall be

conserved.” Since relatively few culturally significant resources have been “protected” (i.e. formally designated) this puts most of Ontario's heritage at risk.

b. Realizing, we are in a climate crisis, and realizing that adaptive reuse of existing buildings can create new housing more quickly, with greater use of local labour, ACO thinks the PPS should discourage needless demolition and encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings; and require municipalities to establish, through their Official Plans, targets for building upgrading, renovation and reuse.

Questions:

What is your opinion of the proposed new Provincial Planning Statement, with regard to cultural heritage, environmental and climate change concerns?

Do you support ACO's concerns about the proposed Provincial Planning Statement? Why or why not?

What changes, if any, would you like to see in the proposed Provincial Planning Statement?

How would you make this happen?

One candidate (Yasir Naqvi) has promised to enact amendments to the Ontario Building Code to support conversions from offices to housing, and work with municipalities to support rezoning and other changes necessary to make this possible. Do you support this course of action?

**3: Would you establish provincial heritage properties grant program?**

Background:

Most provinces provide a province-wide fund or incentive program for the conservation of heritage buildings, e.g., Saskatchewan Built Heritage Grant Program, Yukon Historic Properties Assistance Program, PEI Provincial Heritage Incentive Program. Ontario has nothing.

Questions:

What is your opinion of a provincial heritage properties grant program, e.g., one which matched community commitments to rehabilitation/repair of heritage properties?

If you support such a program, how would you go about establishing it?

#### **4: Would you encourage conversion of existing buildings, e.g., offices, to housing?**

##### Background:

One candidate (Yasir Naqvi) has promised to enact amendments to the Ontario Building Code to support conversions from offices to housing, and work with municipalities to support rezoning and other changes necessary to make this possible.

##### Questions:

What is your opinion of using existing buildings to meet our housing needs?

What measures would you take to encourage this?

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#### **More about ACO**

Through education and advocacy, Architectural Conservancy Ontario encourages the conservation and reuse of structures, districts, and landscapes of architectural, historic, and cultural significance, to inspire and benefit Ontarians.

Retaining our hundreds of thousands of older buildings and investing in their repair and reuse has many benefits. This approach:

- creates more economic growth and jobs than new construction;
- contributes to housing choice for Ontarians through adaptive reuse of existing buildings;
- helps Ontario meet its emission reduction targets;
- grows the green economy and spurs innovation in ways that decarbonize our built environment; and
- strengthens Ontario communities, enhancing identity and pride while building our tourism appeal.