



ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY ONTARIO

The Past
Our Present
Your Future

Housing-focused Heritage Building Grant

Pre-Budget Consultations: 2025 Budget



KEEP | FIX | REUSE

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Our Present
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ACO is Ontario's leading non-governmental organization on built heritage and cultural heritage places.

Through education and advocacy, ACO encourages the conservation and reuse of structures and landscapes of architectural, historic, and cultural significance for the benefit and inspiration of Ontarians.

Our Goal: Keep, fix, and reuse older buildings and places.

We believe strong heritage protections are consistent and compatible with addressing Ontario's housing crisis, and we are requesting a new provincial grant that would demonstrate this.

Top of mind concerns for Ontarians

- Healthcare
- Inflation/Cost of Living
- **Housing Affordability**

Angus Reid October 3, 2024

Conservation of Ontario's Heritage

“Ontarians said that we must protect our environmentally sensitive areas, including the Greenbelt, **cultural heritage assets** and key employment and agricultural lands.”

More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan – May 2019

“Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved.”

Provincial Planning Statement 2024 – 4.6.1

“Identifying and protecting places in our communities that have cultural heritage value is an important part of planning for the future, and of helping to guide change while keeping the buildings, structures, and landscapes that give each of our communities its unique identity.”

Ontario Heritage Toolkit, *Introduction to Designation*

Properties of Significant Heritage Value in Ontario

- Over 7,700 individual properties, located all across Ontario, are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA).
- Heritage Conservation Districts designated under Part V of the OHA contain over 30,000 properties.
- 228 Ontario municipalities have enacted designation by-laws under the OHA.

Repairing and Reusing Heritage Buildings- Protecting Ontario's Future

- **Triggers** more economic growth and jobs than new construction.
- **Contributes** to housing choice for Ontarians through adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- **Helps** save the environment and meet Ontario/Canada's climate targets.
- **Grows** the green economy and spurs innovation in ways that decarbonize our built environment.
- **Strengthens** Ontario communities, enhancing identity and pride while building our tourism brand and appeal.



Church to supportive housing at St. Mark's Place in Kitchener:
Recipient of the ACO Paul Oberman Award for Adaptive Reuse, 2024

Developer Perspective

Ontario developers surveyed by the National Trust for Canada in 2014 ranked a heritage revolving fund as their top incentive to encourage heritage development IF:

- The grants are simple to apply for and to administer; and
- The fund is large enough to meet at least 33% of the demand (so applicants are likely to recover the cost of applying).

More recently, the Ontario Real Estate Association (November 2023) asked for provincial loan guarantees for affordable housing projects and purpose-built rentals, to help lower the cost of borrowing.

ACO Therefore Proposes a New, Housing-focused Heritage Building Grant of \$10M/year

- Simple application and administration (based on an existing program in Alberta)
- Encourages owners and developers to maintain and renovate heritage buildings
- Pays 50% of costs (up to a cap) to building owners to renovate heritage buildings to **create new housing units** (e.g. on main streets above street-level retail space)
- 50% of grant would be paid on approval, to address cost of borrowing

Note: Alberta's 2023-24 budget was slightly over \$1M with approximately 800 designated sites, as compared to Ontario's 7,700 individual properties and over 30,000 properties in Heritage Conservation Districts.

Eligibility and Administration

- Site must be designated under Part IV of the OHA, or be a contributing property in a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the OHA.
- Proposed work must create new housing units, with matching grants capped at \$100,000 per housing unit created on a designated or contributing property as noted above.
- Proposed work must adhere to the federal Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.
- As in the Alberta program, 50% of approved funding is provided at the start of construction, remainder upon completion.

More Effective than Property Tax Relief

Heritage Property Tax Relief (under the Municipal Act) is:

- **Voluntary:** Municipalities are not required to establish a property tax relief program
- **Relatively Modest:** Rebates can range from 10% to 40%
- **Costly for municipalities:** Reduces municipal revenues even if the building increases in value
- **Not timely:** Does not address the up-front cost of renovations to create new housing in a heritage property



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**Thank you for the opportunity
to meet with you.**

Questions?