

Chair's Report

2026 Annual General Meeting

Architectural Conservancy Ontario



It is my pleasure to present this Chair's Report to the 2026 Annual General Meeting of Architectural Conservancy Ontario. The past year has been one of significant transition, careful stewardship, and renewed focus. Through the combined efforts of the Board, branches, volunteers, staff, advisors, and members, ACO has taken important steps to strengthen its governance, stabilize its finances, and position the organization for a more sustainable future. These outcomes have been achieved through a collegial and constructive working relationship across the organization, grounded in a shared commitment to ACO's mission and long-term vitality.

Organizational Renewal and Operating Model Transition

During 2025 and 2026, ACO undertook a thoughtful review of its province-wide charitable operating structure and recognized that meaningful change was required to ensure the organization's continued effectiveness. The Board supported a transition to a more flexible operating environment, including a virtual work model, the establishment of a Steering Committee, the engagement of consulting and legal advice, and the creation of a Transition Team to guide the development of a sustainable future model. This work has provided ACO with disciplined planning, expert guidance, and a clear pathway for decision-making during a complex period of change.

Governance, Oversight, and Shared Accountability

A key priority throughout the year was strengthening governance and ensuring that the Board could respond responsibly and effectively to the issues before it. Dedicated committees and delegated authorities were put in place to manage complex matters, including human resources, legal oversight, operational continuity, and financial decision-making. The Board approved appropriate external support where needed and clarified lines of responsibility during a period of staffing transition. These decisions reflected a shared commitment to transparency, accountability, and respectful stewardship of the organization.

Branch, Membership, and Provincial Relationships

The relationship between ACO's provincial office, branches, and members remained central to the Board's work. Measures were adopted to better align costs, capacity, and responsibilities

across the organization, including a revised branch model, cost-sharing for audit, bookkeeping, and insurance expenses, and a clearer approach to branch viability and re-establishment. The Board also approved changes to membership payments and fees and endorsed a future hybrid model, with affiliate arrangements for larger branches and associate arrangements for smaller branches. These decisions were made with the aim of supporting volunteer energy, improving fairness and transparency, and giving branches options that better reflect their circumstances and capacity.

Financial Stabilization and Operational Continuity

Financial stabilization was another major focus of the year. The Board approved practical interim measures to reduce fixed costs, maintain essential operations, and protect ACO's compliance and fiduciary responsibilities. These measures included the use of external consulting and legal support, staffing adjustments, interim financial and operations coordination, approval of the 2026 Provincial Office budget, and the temporary suspension and later policy-based management of grants and donations. The Board also supported work on updated by-laws, policies, procedures, corporate priorities, and future planning. Together, these steps have helped ACO maintain continuity while creating the conditions for longer-term renewal.

Financial Outlook

The financial outlook reflects the progress made through this transition work. The Transition Team's report indicates that ACO is moving toward a substantially improved financial position, with future deficits expected to be significantly lower than those experienced during the recent period of transition. The current year continues to reflect one-time and transitional costs, including carry-forward staffing obligations and audit-related expenses associated with the former branch structure, but these pressures are expected to lessen as the new operating model takes hold.

Further reductions are expected as branches transition to affiliate and associate models, as audit costs are reviewed, and as alternate platforms for donation and membership management are adopted. Increased fundraising activity will also be an important part of strengthening ACO's revenue base.

The organization's investment fund will continue to be used cautiously and only as needed, with funds held in a modest investment vehicle to limit risk while generating limited revenue. The Board recognizes that these funds may decline depending on fundraising success and overall revenue generation and will continue to monitor this position carefully.

ACO also has opportunities to generate additional revenue through agency agreements. These arrangements may provide meaningful support to the organization while also allowing ACO to meet its obligations to partner agencies responsibly. Because these opportunities are not yet

reflected in the current forecasts, they represent potential upside rather than assumed revenue, and the related funds will continue to be managed with appropriate care.

Alongside this careful financial stewardship, we are excited to continue advancing ACO's public-facing work and provincial leadership. We look forward to hosting the Heritage Awards on October 29th in Hamilton, a completely volunteer-organized event that celebrates the people, projects, and partnerships helping to protect Ontario's heritage. We also continue to value the publication of *Acorn* as an important voice for heritage conservation, and we remain committed to strong advocacy for the conservation of Ontario's special places. Our campaign for the Heritage Helping Housing grant, together with our continued work to support the protection of heritage properties, reflects the ongoing importance of ACO's mission and the dedication of those who carry it forward.

Looking Ahead

In summary, ACO has navigated an important period of change with care, professionalism, and a strong spirit of collaboration. The outcomes achieved this year reflect the dedication of many people working together: Board members who have given thoughtful leadership, branches and volunteers who continue to advance heritage conservation in their communities, advisors who have provided specialized guidance, and members whose support remains essential to ACO's mission. While work remains, the organization is now better positioned to move forward with a leaner structure, clearer accountability, stronger financial discipline, and a renewed sense of shared purpose.

Looking ahead, ACO's work will require continued focus and shared effort. Our branches will be supported as they renew themselves as strong local entities connected to a province-wide organization, while provincial operations continue to develop a focused Board structure that draws on the commitment of volunteers, allies, partners, and community organizations. Reaching beyond our 100th anniversary in 2033 will depend on growing and diversifying our membership across Ontario, strengthening our province-wide representation, and ensuring that ACO's message is clear, consistent, and connected to the work being done in communities throughout the province.

This forward plan will also require ACO to build on existing relationships and pursue new partnerships with like-minded and diverse organizations that share our commitment to heritage conservation. Through initiatives such as the Heritage Awards, *Acorn*, policy and fundraising work, and campaigns such as Heritage Helping Housing, ACO will continue to advance the principle of Keep | Fix | Reuse and make the case that heritage conservation is a practical contributor to sustainability, housing alternatives, environmental protection, community development, and our shared identity as Ontarians and Canadians. Education, advocacy, and the celebration of milestones will remain central to empowering members and allies and to recognizing the progress made along the way.

On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere thanks to our branches, volunteers, members, advisors, partners, and supporters for their continued commitment to Architectural Conservancy Ontario. Your dedication, generosity, and collegial spirit have made this year's progress possible and will continue to guide ACO as we protect, celebrate, and advocate for Ontario's special places. I am pleased to present this report to the Annual General Meeting and look forward to the work we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

Debra Crawford
Chair,
Architectural Conservancy Ontario