

**Architectural Conservancy Ontario
Annual General Meeting
27 June 2026**



Summary Report of the Committees of the Board

Acorn Committee Year in Review – 2025

Prepared by Tammy Dewhirst on January 16, 2026:

Members of the Acorn Committee 2025: Susan Ratcliffe (Chair, Spring 2025), Tammy Dewhirst (Member, Spring 2025 and Chair, Fall 2025), Deeksha Choudry (Editor), Hylder Barbosa (Designer), Allison Drummond (Executive Board Liaison Spring 2025), Diane Chin (Executive Board Liaison Fall 2025), Adrian Lancashire (Development Coordinator), Jane Clark, and Sarah King-Head.

In 2024, cost-saving measures required that the issue already in progress become the final print edition of Acorn Magazine. Although it had been planned and budgeted as a 2024 release, production delays pushed publication into 2025, making the Spring 2025 issue the last one to be printed and mailed to readers.

The Committee meets regularly to meet the extended deadline and complete production. The print edition was distributed to members in April 2025, featuring the theme “Sacred and Sustainable.” With the release of this issue, Susan Ratcliffe stepped down after 18 years as Chair of the Acorn Committee, taking a well-deserved break. Tammy Dewhirst agreed to assume the Chair role for the first digital edition. Around the same time, Allison Drummond left the Committee to pursue new opportunities, and Diane Chin joined to fill her position.

The move to a digital edition opened the door to new possibilities, including the ability to make content partially interactive. The inaugural digital issue focused on Buildings at Risk: Balancing Housing and Conserving Heritage Buildings. Recognizing that some readers would still prefer a printed version, the design was intentionally created so it could be easily printed at home if desired.

Our Development Coordinator worked diligently to secure advertising, while the Committee focused on gathering content and shaping the vision for the new digital format. We established a model in which the magazine would be hosted on our website, limiting expenses to existing web-hosting costs and the staff time required for promotion and distribution. A standout moment came when Richard Longley submitted an illustrated walking tour; Jane Clark collaborated with our designer, Hylder, to make it a centerpiece of the issue. Adrian Lancashire’s advertising efforts were highly successful, and the resulting ad revenue was many times higher than in previous years.

Acorn Magazine officially launched as a fully digital publication on October 22, 2025, and member feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

The Fall Acorn is still hosted on Hylder’s website, and we hope to migrate it to our own site as soon as possible. Its production came with a few valuable lessons, but we’re now well-equipped and confident as we work toward releasing the Spring Acorn in April 2026. The upcoming theme

is “**Roots and Routes: Cross Cultural Journeys Through Ontario Heritage.**” The submission deadline has been extended to January 30, 2026, so there’s still time if you’ve been considering contributing an article.

Fundraising Committee – A Year in Review:

Members: Deb Crawford (chair) Tammy Dewhirst, Marlee Robinson, Alex Millar Gerrard, Kae Elgie.

Staff: Adrian Lancashire, Development Officer, Will Coukell COO

Established a modest fundraising plan focusing on promoting ACO during established events such as the Ontario Heritage Conference held in Prince Edward County, and the Heritage Awards event in October 2025.

Developed the policy for the establishment of the “Friends of ACO” ambassador program and began soliciting key supporters however this was put on hold pending ACO’s restructuring.

The launch of the “No Show Ball” August met with moderate success in terms of support in the form of donations.

The sponsorship campaign to support the Heritage Awards, Acorn and the various advocacy campaigns throughout the year successfully garnered support from many organizations and individuals. On behalf of the Fundraising Committee and ACO’s Board of Directors thank you for your support and belief in ACO.

Governance & Nominating Committee: A Year in Review

Members: Diane Chin (committee chair) Deb Crawford, Will Coukell (COO)

1. Recruitment for Treasurer

Thank you to Eben Rawluk who served on the Board for 6 years. A new Treasurer, Taimoor Ali Kureshi, was found after a lengthy search.

2. Recruitment for Board Positions

Thank you to Alison Drummond and Ian Worte, both of whom left because of other commitments. Thank you also to Marlee Robinson, who served 6 years on the Board. Hayden Bulbrook joined as the Next Gen Representative. Three recent recruits on an Interim basis are Felicity Pope, Nicolas Lamoureux and Don Macintosh.

3. Committee Chair Changes

We welcomed Lynne DiStefano as Chair of the Governance & Community Relations Committee. After many years as Chair of Acorn, Susan Ratcliffe retired. Tammy Dewhirst assumed this role, and we thank her for taking this on. Louise Bish resigned as Chair of Human Resources after serving for two years. A meeting was organized with Committee Chairs.

4. The G&NC Chair has been working on the OWG/Steering Committee and the subsequent Transition Team for ACO Reimagined.
5. New members were interviewed and appointed to the many committees of the Board.
6. A special Board meeting was organized with Ted Hyland to review the responsibilities of Board members under ONCA and the Charities Act.
7. The Strategic Plan Implementation was put on hold, pending ACO Reimagined.
8. Orientation meetings were held for new Board members.
9. As members of the National Council of the National Trust of Canada the National Trust Statement on “The Significance of Heritage in Canada” was recommended and endorsed by ACO.

Governance & Community Relations Committee: A Year in Review

Members: Lynne D DiStefano (Chair) Marlee Robinson, Lynn Baker, Diane Chin, Marg Rowell, Kae Elgie Ex-officio members: Deb Crawford, Dan Schneider Policy Committee

Submitted by Committee Chair: Lynne D. DiStefano

Heritage Helping Housing

During 2025, the primary focus of the Government and Community Relations Committee (GCRC) was working closely with the Policy Committee (PC) on the **Heritage Helping Housing** (HHH) Campaign. A working group composed of four members (Lynn Baker, Lynne DiStefano [GCRC Chair], Kae Elgie, and Dan Schneider [PC Chair]) was tasked with carrying out the HHH Campaign. Lynn Baker is to be credited with suggesting the title of the campaign. Allison Drummond, past GCRC Chair, kindly conducted an online training session.

Early in the year (the week of April 22-25), congratulatory letters were sent to all newly elected MPPs - and a one-pager explaining the HHH Campaign was attached. Response was muted.

Given the response, the one-pager was expanded to an illustrated two-pager and the decision was made to send both the slide deck and illustrated two-pager to relevant ministers in early 2026 and before budget deliberations. (This has been done.) Both GCRC Member Kae Elgie and PC Chair Dan Schneider submitted requests to present the HHH material for pre-budget consultation. (Both requests have been turned down.)

In conjunction with direct appeals to MPPs and relevant ministers, the Chairs of the GCRC and PC – and ACO’s Chair - met with MCM staff on October 8th re: the HHH Campaign. (To date there has been no feedback,)

Throughout the year – and when appropriate – HHH updates have appeared in *Acorn in a Nutshell*.

Listed Buildings Extension

During the meeting with MCM on October 8th, ministry staff were queried as to the possibility of the current two-year extension being extended for a further period. (To date there has been no feedback.) This is a concern of both the GCRC and PC and is a 2026 priority.

Bill 5

GCRC Member Kae Elgie – and PC Chair Dan Schneider and ACO Chair Deb Crawford – provided a detailed response to Bill5 (Schedules 7, 8, and 9). It was sent out to *Acorn in a Nutshell* subscriber on May 13th, 2025.

MCM’s Heritage Modernization – Phase 1

On April 16th, GCRC Chair Lynne DiStefano and PC Chair Dan Schneider joined ACO Chair Deb Crawford for the initial consultation with Optimus SBR re: MCM’s Heritage Modernization - Phase 1. Deb Crawford was invited to be part of a second Phase 1 focus group (May 6th, 2025). During the meeting with MCM staff on October 8th, there was a general update on the consultancy.

Heritage Tool Kit

In consultation with an MCM staff member, the province’s new Heritage Tool Kit was advertised in the June *Acorn in a Nutshell*.

Ongoing Relationships with Other Related Organizations: Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAO)

GCRC Member Kae Elgie represented ACO at a Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAO) event entitled IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism, where she made a ten-minute presentation (“Dose of Innovation”) about ACO, including the HHH Campaign.

ACO is also involved with TIAO podcasts, the first of which was recorded on July 17th, 2025. Participants were GCRC Chair Lynne DiStefano, GCRC Member Kae Elgie, and ACO Member Cathy Nasmith. Response to the podcast was positive and it was suggested by TIAO that there could be more ACO involvement in the future.

GCRC Description -

Marlee Robinson drafted a description of GCRC.

Policy Committee Report: A Year in Review

By Dan Schneider, Chair

Committee Members: Dan Schneider (Chair), Deb Crawford (ex officio as ACO Board Chair). Lynne DiStefano (ex officio as GCRC chair), Catherine Nasmith, Diane Chin (has now resigned), Kae Elgie, Paul King, Robert Shipley, Liz Driver, Jane Clark

Main activities of the Policy Committee in 2025:

1. Committee membership

- Liz Driver (formerly president of the PEC ACO branch) and Jane Clark (member of the provincial executive) joined the committee in 2025 while Diane Chin (provincial past president) left the committee. The committee currently consists of 9 members.

2. ACO Heritage Action Day 2025

- The committee is responsible for the content of the materials (slide deck, etc.) used on Heritage Action Day and for developing the policy requests (aka asks) to the Ontario government.
- The 2024 slide deck was updated for 2025 with appropriate modifications.
- The key ask was the Housing-focused Heritage Building Grant of \$10M/year (now called Heritage Helping Housing). The committee researched heritage grants in other Canadian jurisdictions.
- Because of the early election call HAD was cancelled. Pre-budget consultation hearings were also cancelled.
- The housing-focused heritage grant program did not appear in the 2025 Ontario Budget.

3. Bill 5 ERO submissions

- The committee prepared three submissions to the Environmental Registry of Ontario related to Bill 5, the Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act.
- The submissions, posted on May 16/25, provided comments on three aspects of the legislation:
 - changes to Part VI of the Ontario Heritage Act
 - changes to the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act, 2023
 - new Special Economic Zones Act
- Bill 5 passed without amendment.

3. MCM's Heritage Framework Initiative

- The Chairs of GCRC and Policy Committees attended an initial consultation session followed by a second session attended by ACO's Chair.
- The committee continued to monitor the progress of this initiative. We also stay connected with our close allies, especially OAHP, on this.

4. Heritage Helping Housing 2026

- The committee has worked closely with the Government and Community Relations Committee on a revised housing-focused grant. A four-person HHH campaign team was established with two members from each committee.
- Members of the two committees solicited names on a petition to establish such a program at the Ontario Heritage Conference in June in Picton.
- A Heritage Helping Housing 2026 pre-budget consultation submission was submitted to the province in early December.

5. Government Initiatives Watch List

- The Policy Committee continued to keep an eye on the following potential government policy initiatives:
 - New Heritage Conservation District regulations: nothing to report.
 - Changes to Standards and Guidelines for Provincial Heritage Properties: nothing to report.