

Chair's Report for AGM June 24, 2023

Through Education and Advocacy, to encourage the conservation and reuse of structures, districts and landscapes of architectural, historic and cultural significance, to inspire and benefit Ontarians.

2018-2022 Strategic Plan Goals

The Strategic Directions and Key Priorities operationalize Architectural Conservancy Ontario's mission and as such should serve as a foundation for planning for the foreseeable future.

Responsible Financial Reporting

During 2022 I began the second year of my term in June at the last AGM. I have agreed to do a third term so that I will be here for another year until June 2024. 2022 therefore was my first full year as fiscally our year runs from January until December. I want to congratulate the Branches along with Tai So, our Branch Coordinator, Will Coukell, COO and Eben Rawluk, Treasurer on the completion of the Audit. Hence this AGM is being held in June and we are thus financially compliant with CRA regulations. Finally, thank you to the Branches for your work in getting the financials completed for this AGM.

Scalable Long Term Development and Fundraising

One of our ongoing challenges is the future financial viability of the organization. We are in the process of hiring a new Development Coordinator who would manage fundraising for the organization. As part of the Strategic Plan process that we are currently undertaking, this strategic direction will be front and centre in our discussions.

Well Stewarded Branch Development

Over the course of my term, one of my goals was to work with Branches so that there was more of a relationship between Branches and the Board. Consequently, I began a Branch newsletter which I have continued to publish after each Board and/or Executive meeting. This newsletter reaches out to all of the members of the Branch Boards. In talking to each of the Branch Chairs/ Branch representatives, I have come to learn that they have been receiving them and have appreciated the updates on Board activities. Connecting the 9 Committees who do work on behalf of the organization with the 16 Branches who represent the organization geographically was and has been a challenge. I have continued to ask the branches to invite me to their meetings and/or events and I will attend where possible.

Engaging Communications: Connect with Membership; Tell our story; Promote the value of What We Do

As was mentioned, relationships with the Branches are important for the continued success of the organization. An organization that does not work cooperatively and

collaboratively with its parts cannot function. And this works both ways. As Chair, I have continued to stress that Branch Boards share information from the organization with their members. If the grassroots does not see value in the work of the Board, then our organization cannot be as strong as it should. The work of the ACO should therefore filter into the communities that the Boards serve.

I have had the opportunity this past year to speak to communities where there are no ACO Branches to assist with their Heritage concerns and to speak of the role of ACO.

Powerful Advocating with Government and Other Bodies

Heritage is under attack in Ontario. Under the misdirected notion of Heritage being an impediment to housing and even affordable housing, legislation was introduced late in 2022. This Act known as Bill 23 was the manifestation of concerns raised the year before in the Housing Affordability Task Force. Working along with the Policy Committee and the Government and Community Relations committees of ACO to produce media releases, responses to the ERO and letters to Ministers and MPP's, kept all of us very busy to advocate on behalf of not only ACO members but all Ontarians who care about our province's history and heritage.

Apart from all of the communication mentioned above, I, along with many other ACO members attended the conference in Brockville in 2022, London in 2023 and attended MPP Day at Queen's Park in both 2022 and 2023. We have also reached out to staff members who work in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing along with Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism since the political members of these Ministries have been avoiding us.

Privatization is also another initiative of the government and one that impacts the Heritage world in the name of Ontario Place. ACO and Ontario Place for All was able to reach out to the Auditor General to ask for a meeting regarding concerns that the Standards and Guidelines under Part III of the OHA had not been followed. We also had concerns over the lack of transparency for the lease agreements and the expenditure of public monies.

Operational and Organization Review Follow-up

The previous Strategic Plan was for 2017-2022 and we are organizing by the end of 2022 to start the planning for updating this Plan.

Embracing Diverse Groups through Outreach

Although it continues to be a goal that we have not lost sight of, this area continued to be a challenge. Our organization has attracted a few members from diverse communities to its committees and Branches. In advocating for changes to Bill 23, we have continually pointed out that this Bill discriminates against LGBTQ2S+ and BIPOC communities. An ongoing concern is also diversity in age and we would hope to continue to work to gain Next Gen members provincially and in the Branches.

Going Forward:

With the aforementioned achievements and challenges in mind, we began the fiscal year of 2023, with the following goals:

1. Working with Government

It is somewhat obvious that a great deal of work is being done in this area and that is continuing. A new challenge has presented itself in the form of a new Provincial Planning Statement. Please send your comments to the ERO and if you want help with that, you can always email me.

The Ontario Science Centre in Don Mills is also now under threat of demolition. I shall be continuing to advocate for its retention on the current site and with renewed programming and renovation to the facility.

2. Scalable Long Term Development and Fundraising

We can see from the Financial Reports that our finances are a concern. We are using up some of our principal assets. Currently, a committee has been struck for the new Strategic Plan and this will be one of the issues that will be foremost in our minds as we plan for the next five years.

3. Embracing Diverse Groups Through Outreach

Heritage conservation is no longer focussed on just settler landscapes. We need to learn more and be more inviting to Indigenous and immigrant groups. We need to reach out to these groups so that they can see that by working together, more can be accomplished.

4. Engaging Communications and Well Stewarded Branch Development

It continues to be a goal to engage with the membership and to enlarge the membership. Many of the branches have seen their membership dwindle throughout Covid and it is imperative that all branches resolve to regain members. Some branches are involved in outreach in new communities within their boundaries. Others are looking to reach out to younger members and are developing social media strategies. Branches should resolve to find activities beyond just advocating to prevent demolition but to celebrate the heritage they have. This can be done by engaging with their communities such as in Doors Open Events, Jane's Walks, and House Tours etc. In so doing, new members may be attracted to the branch, thus lightening the load for all of us who are working so hard in these difficult times for heritage.

I continue to have concerns over the lack of relationship between Board initiatives and the membership. Last year's MPP day had 22 ACO members participate. Every branch has an MPP and it should be important to all branch members that someone from the branch participate on that day.

Gaining funding and interacting to celebrate the work we do at Awards Night is important to the reputation and viability of the organization. Again there was not a lot of attendance for that evening. Please encourage all members in your Branch to attend this very important ACO event .And please nominate individuals in your communities for Awards when they have participated in significant heritage preservation projects and events.

Conclusion:

2022 presented a lot of challenges and 2023 continues to do so. Thank you to all ACO members for the work that you do to protect heritage. Only by having as much of us working together for the same goals, can we fight the good fight and protect what we know to be important in our province.