

PRESS RELEASE

April 8, 2024



ARCHITECTURAL
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ONTARIO

With most of Ontario's heritage properties losing protection by year-end, ACO urges Province to extend deadline

The clock is fast running down for protection of thousands of heritage properties listed by municipalities under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Changes to the Act by the Ford government in 2022 required each municipality to remove every listed property from its heritage register within two years – by January 1, 2025 – unless that municipality has begun the process to designate a listed property prior to the deadline.

According to the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, this change affects some **36,000 listed heritage properties** in scores of municipalities across the province. Unlike a designated property, a listed property has only modest, short-term (60 day) protection. The enforced removal from registers will take away this protection and put these heritage properties at increased risk of demolition. Properties that lose their listing status cannot be re-listed for another five years.

ACO Chair Diane Chin warns that forcing municipalities to designate all listed properties by next January 1 or drop them from their registers is draconian and totally unrealistic. “With the expiry date now months away, municipalities have been scrambling to review their registers and prioritize properties for designation or other protection,” says Chin. “But this is nearly impossible on such a tight timeline.” ACO’s research shows that no more than a small fraction of Ontario’s listed properties are in line for designation by year-end. In small-town St. Marys, Ontario, for example, only two of 112 listed properties are expected to be designated.

Chin has written to Premier Ford urging the Province to extend the deadline for five years, until January 1, 2030. “This would give municipalities time to better plan, resource and implement a complex undertaking,” she says. An extended deadline would help municipalities ensure that properties are not thrown off the register prematurely and without input from property owners, many of whom are not aware of what’s happening.

Chin adds that “ACO believes property owners should not be forced to choose between designation and nothing at all to recognize the heritage significance of their property. But, if this is what the government wants, they could easily provide a few more years to help municipalities work with their communities to get it right.”

Architectural Conservancy Ontario is the largest voice for heritage in Ontario, founded in 1933 with branches in 17 communities across the province.

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