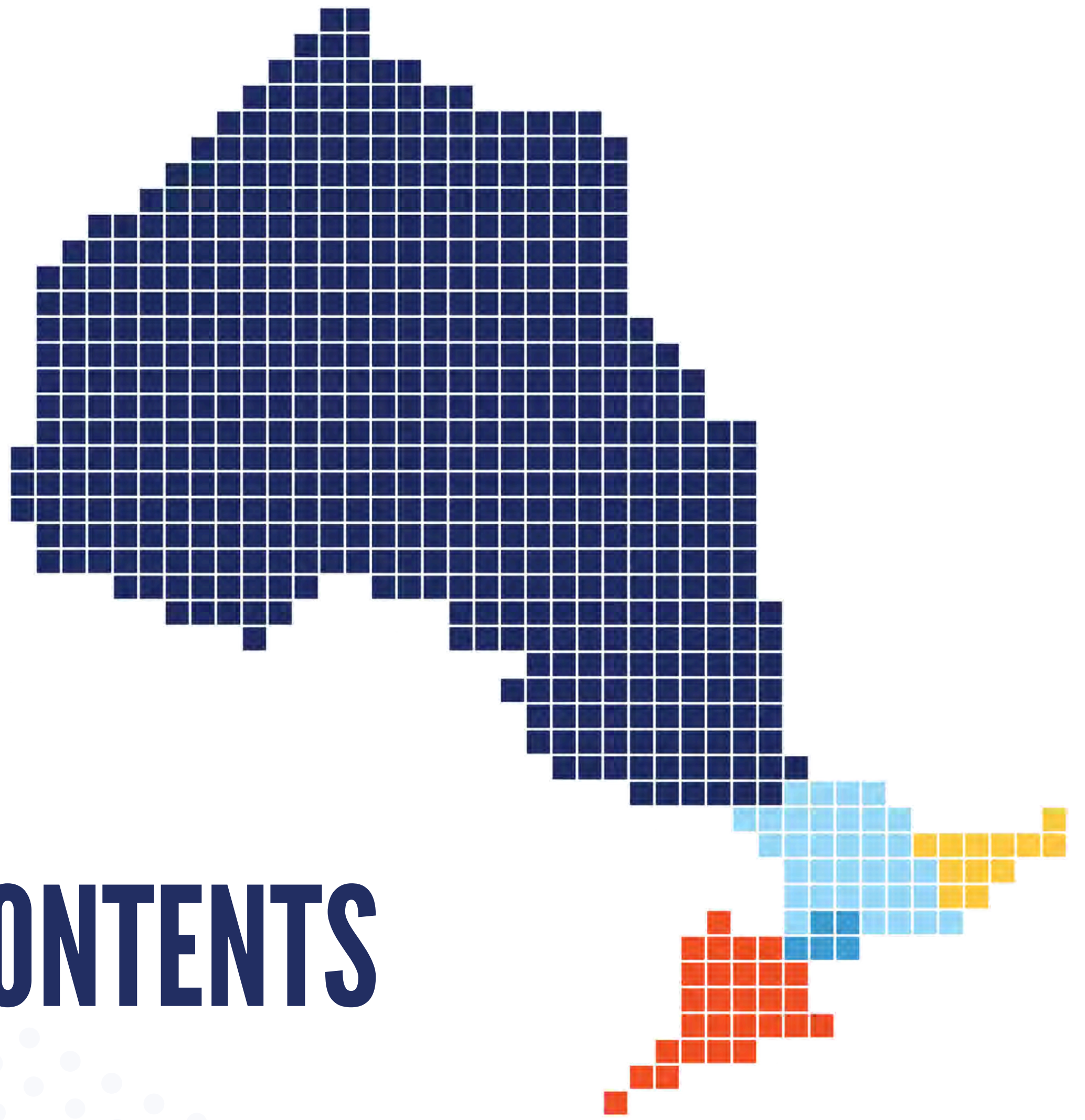




ONTARIO  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY *Since 1888*



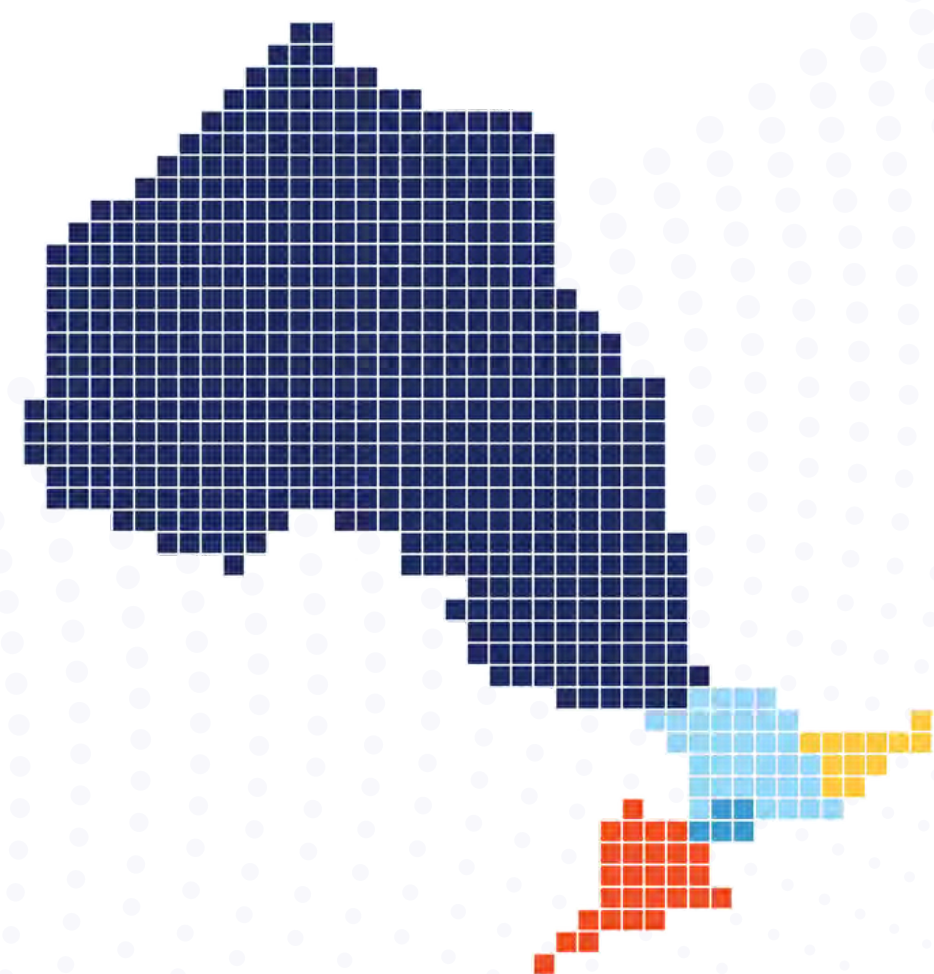
# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2026-2030



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3...	Who We Are
5...	2026–2030 Strategic Plan Development
6...	Pillar 1: Capacity Building for Members
8...	Pillar 2: Modernizing and Strengthening Communications
10...	Pillar 3: Organizational Strength & Sustainability
12...	Funding Strategy
13...	Contact

# WHO WE ARE



## ABOUT THE OHS

Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society (OHS) is a not-for-profit, non-government organization with a membership of individuals, organizations, and institutions from across Ontario. 95% of our members are located outside the City of Toronto. The OHS supports a vast network of local/regional heritage organizations and professionals. Staff and volunteers provide advice and support to more than 300 affiliated societies and more than 800 individual, organizational, and institutional members in total.

## OUR MISSION

To support and strengthen the connection of individuals, organizations, and communities to Ontario's history.

### HOW WE FULFIL THAT MISSION:

- Facilitate the formation of new historical societies and heritage organizations that seek to preserve or promote the history of Ontario.
- Support a network of volunteer-run, grassroots historical organizations and institutions by providing guidance, education, networking opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Promote the activities of our members and advocate on behalf of their shared goals and needs.
- Unite Ontario's historical societies and encourage communication and cooperation among them.
- Undertake and support initiatives that encourage or uphold the study, preservation, and celebration of Ontario's history.

# WHAT WE BELIEVE

History is about more than built heritage. History encompasses the landscapes and environments from which it emerges, reflecting the diverse peoples, perspectives, and social contexts that shape it. The celebration and preservation of our history strengthens communities and local economies. As volunteer-run historical organizations and institutions have taken on so much of this responsibility, they must be properly supported and empowered to do this important work on behalf of the public interest.

# OUR CORE VALUES

- Respect for all Ontarians and their unique histories
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Transparency and good governance
- Accountability and professionalism

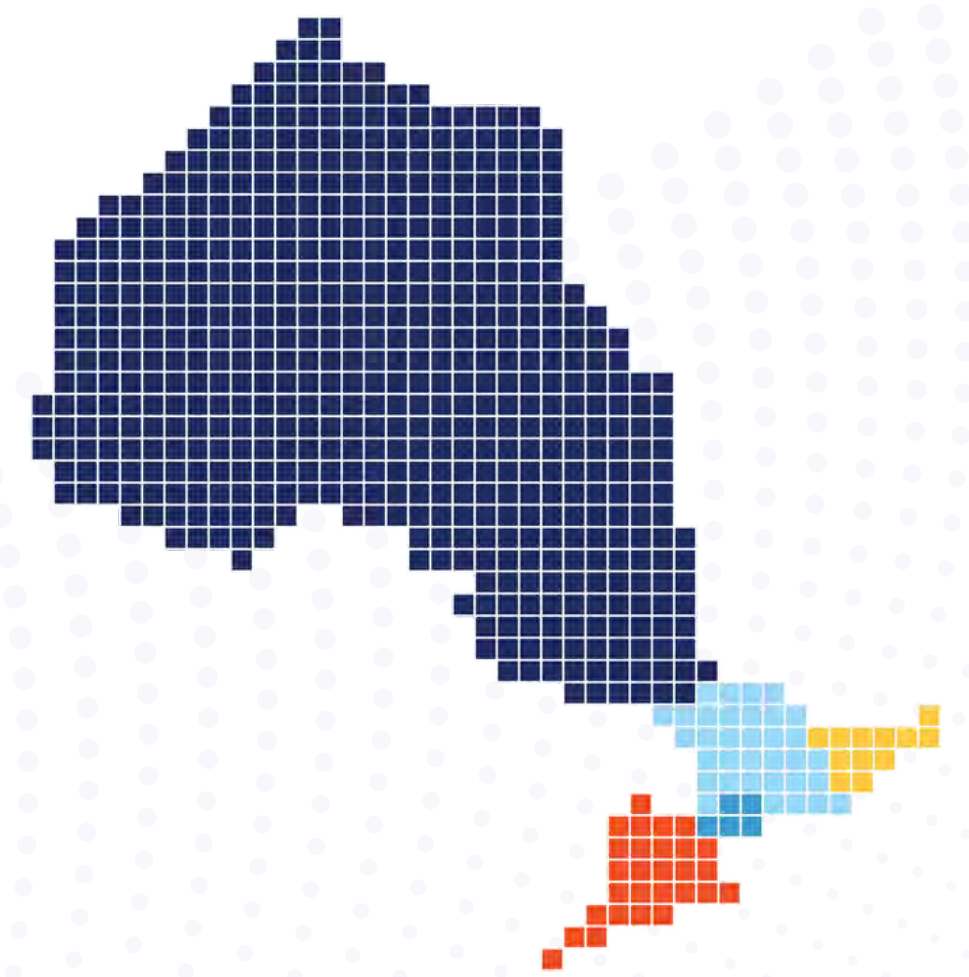
# OUR STRUCTURE

- The OHS is governed by a volunteer board of directors representing different regions of the province and a variety of professional backgrounds. Our operations are supported by four permanent staff and a vast network of volunteers and community representatives.



*OHS Affiliate Society,  
Canadian Lighthouses of Lake Superior  
Incorporated by the OHS in 2014*

# STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT



The Ontario Historical Society's last strategic plan expired in 2020. In 2024, the Board of Directors established a Strategic Planning Committee to lead a province-wide consultation process and gather input from members, stakeholders, and sector partners. The goal was to better understand the challenges facing Ontario's heritage community and to identify where the OHS could most effectively support its members. The Society's new strategic direction reflects the findings of those consultations.

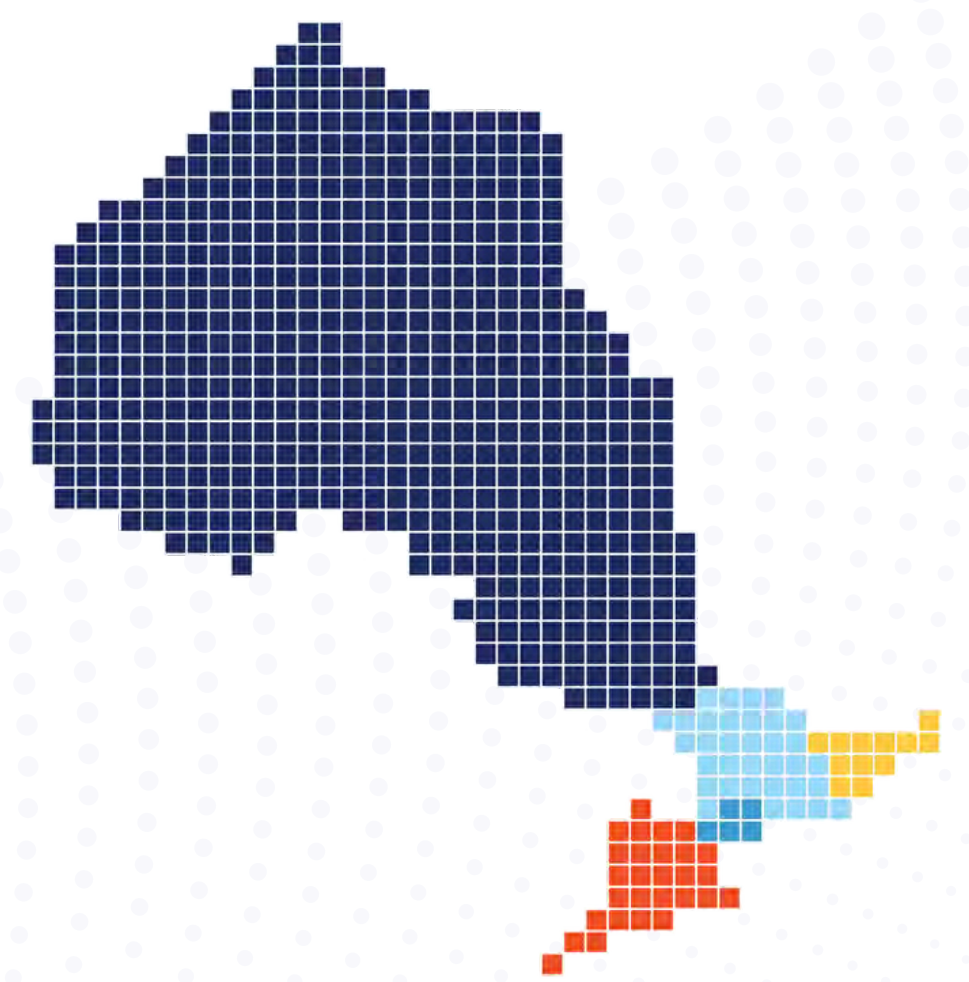
Consultations took place between August 2024 and August 2025 through surveys, community meetings, and individual interviews. Members provided feedback on OHS communications and publications, while regional meetings—held both virtually and in person—brought together representatives from organizations across the province. The OHS also conducted one-on-one discussions with stakeholders, including peer organizations, heritage professionals, funders, and government staff. In addition, subscribers to *Ontario History* were surveyed for their perspectives. Across all formats, the feedback revealed consistent priorities and challenges in our sector and throughout our membership, providing a strong foundation for the Society's new strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee has identified three distinct pillars of focus for 2026–2030:



- 1: Capacity Building for Members
- 2: Modernizing and Strengthening Communications
3. Organizational Strength & Sustainability

# PILLAR NUMBER ONE



## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MEMBERS

*We strengthen Ontario's heritage community by establishing new affiliate organizations to serve their communities. We seek to equip our members with the tools, training, and resources they need to thrive. We seek to connect historical societies with new volunteers and young historians.*

### GOALS

- Enhance the organizational and operational capacity of OHS members.
- Foster sustainable and modernized heritage organizations utilizing professional guidance and resources.

### OBJECTIVES

- Deliver capacity building workshops and webinars on core competencies for running sustainable grassroots organizations and heritage societies, including good governance, financial management, strategic planning, fundraising, financial planning, succession planning, best practices, and more.
- Offer advisory support on organizational development and grant applications.
- Develop a Resource Library of toolkits and templates for key functions including policy and procedure development, fundraising, marketing, and more.
- Establish youth-focused volunteer, internship, and mentorship templates for member organizations to use.
- Provide training on inclusive storytelling and youth engagement practices for historical societies.

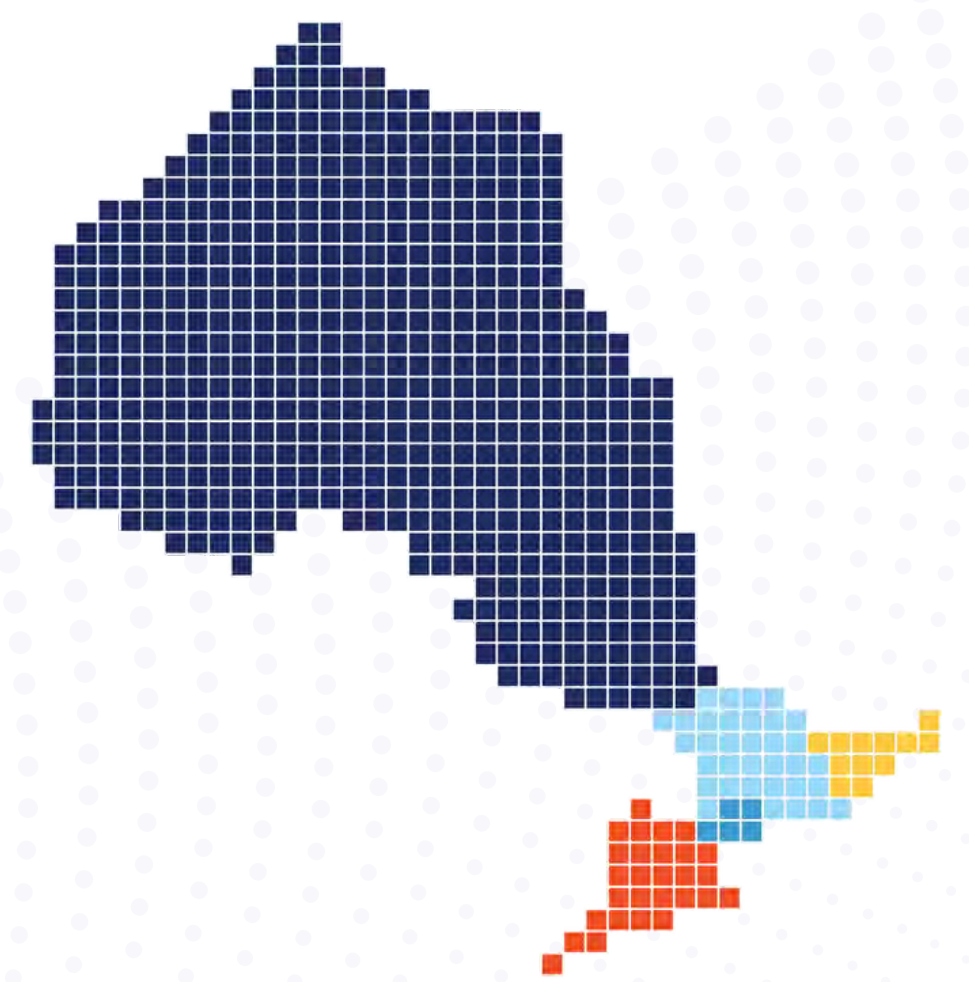
## MEASURING SUCCESS

- Annual increase in participation across all regions.
- Documented use of OHS toolkits/templates by member organizations.
- Member feedback on advisory services (survey data).
- Increasing size and diversity of the OHS membership.
- Growth in youth volunteer hours and employment hours.
- OHS member utilization and positive feedback with networking and training resources on youth engagement.

*OHS Affiliate Society,  
the Friends of Hope Mill  
Incorporated by the OHS in 2017*



# PILLAR NUMBER TWO



## MODERNIZING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATIONS

*We advocate for Ontario's history and disseminate important heritage sector news through trusted publications. We amplify the voices of our members with the OHS Bulletin. We share scholarly research and writing about Ontario's unique history with hundreds of thousands of people every year through our journal, Ontario History.*

### GOALS

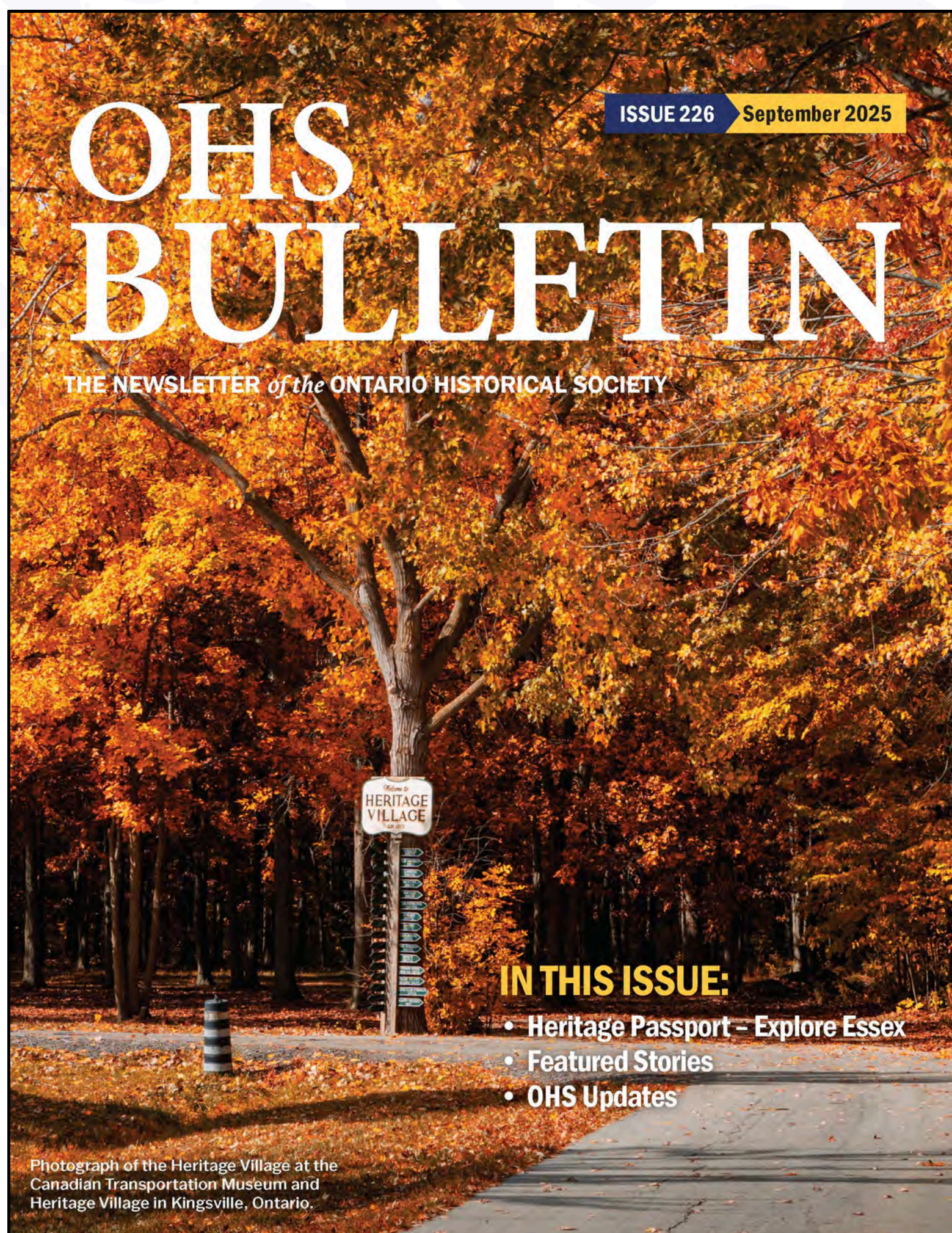
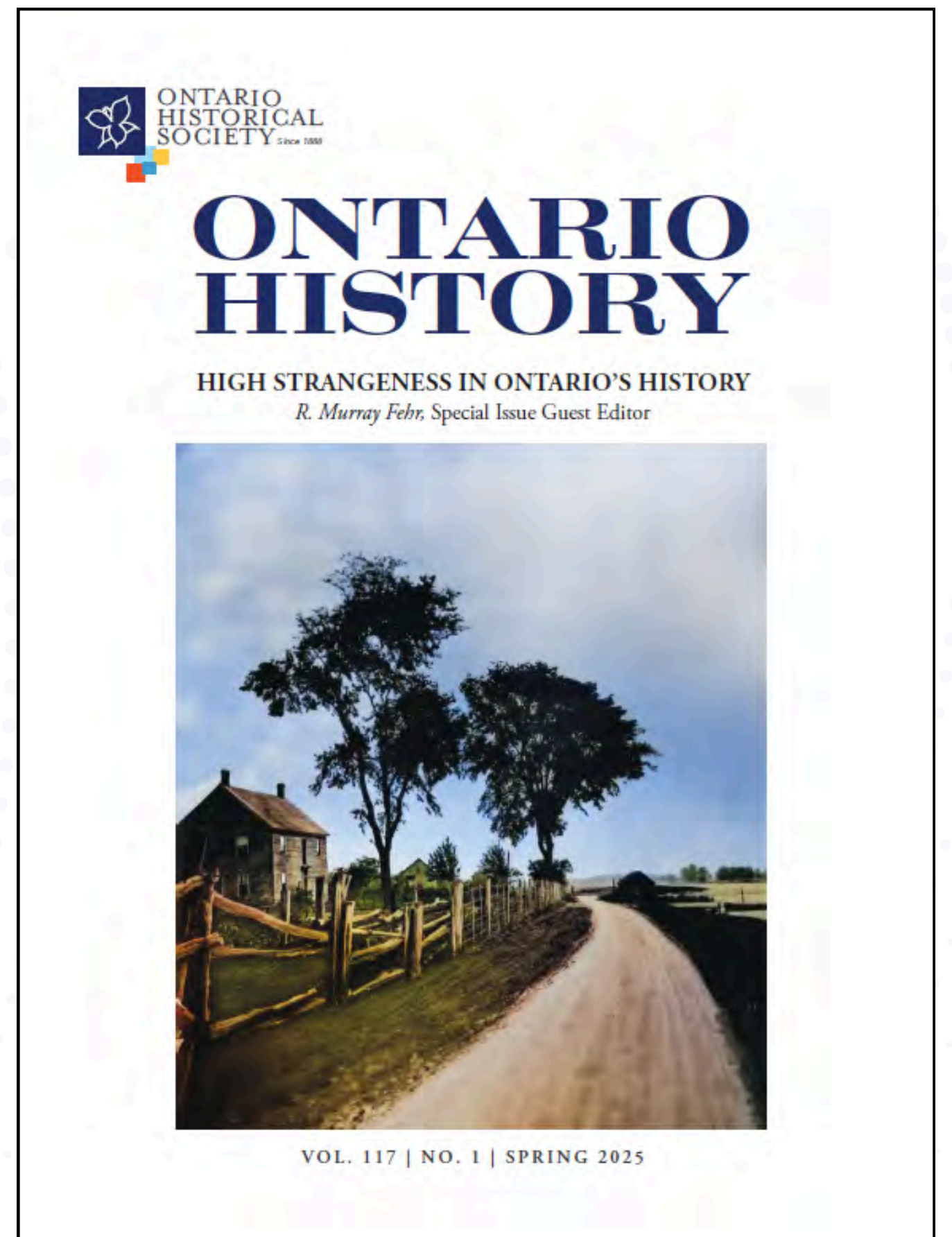
- Modernize *Ontario History* journal and the *OHS Bulletin*.
- Strengthen OHS's communications to better promote members' events, achievements, and challenges, as well as OHS programs and services.

### OBJECTIVES

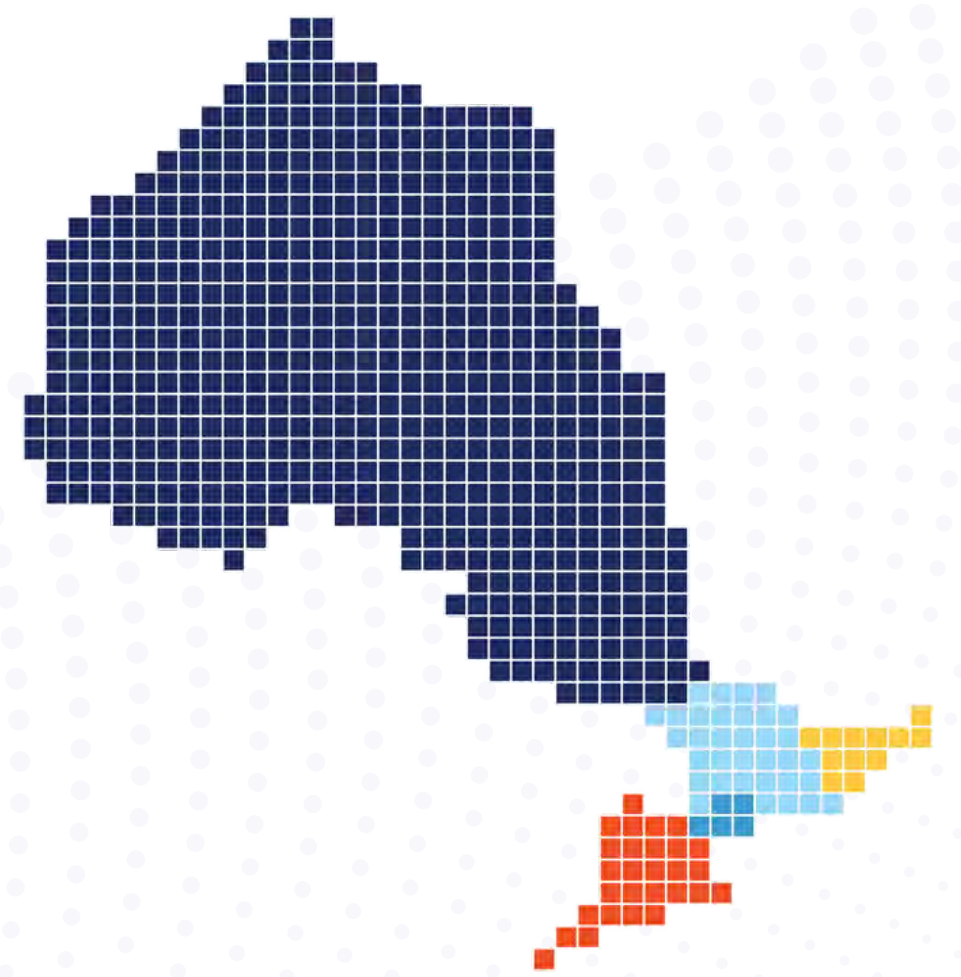
- Expand the content and renew the designs of *Ontario History* and the *OHS Bulletin* in response to consultation and survey feedback.
- Take *Ontario History* journal open access by 2027 to reach an even larger audience of readers, students, and scholars.
- Transition the *OHS Bulletin* to a digital-first model while offering a print option for a small additional cost.
- Directly involve undergraduate and graduate students with OHS publications and provide real opportunities to contribute and connect with members.
- Take a more active role in collecting and amplifying news from our members.
- Reorganize the OHS website to feature news and stories from members across the province to expand our platform for promoting member achievements and contributions.
- Streamline OHS's online platforms to make resources and publications easier to access and more visible to new audiences and potential readers.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

- Sustained or increased publication subscriptions/memberships.
- Increased web traffic and social media engagement metrics.
- Documented growth in members' use of OHS communications support offers.
- Attraction of new members and subscribers from previously unreached audiences/demographics.
- Increasing downloads of OHS publications online.
- Positive feedback from members/subscribers.
- Increasing annual award nominations.
- Increased engagement with OHS programs/services.
- Increase in student contributions to OHS publications.



# PILLAR NUMBER THREE



## ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH & SUSTAINABILITY

*We ensure the long-term success of the OHS by investing in our people, programs, and partnerships.*

### GOALS

- Strengthen the internal capacity and sustainability of the OHS.

### OBJECTIVES

- Review and revitalize membership program with strategic focus on membership retention, membership growth, and financial sustainability of the program.
- Identify gaps in existing staff and board expertise. Recruit and retain volunteers with these skills to strengthen the organization's leadership.
- Expand succession planning outreach and tracking and add to evergreen list for board of directors.
- Diversify and strengthen revenue streams to better establish the OHS as a financially sustainable charity and to fund the strategically critical projects outlined in this plan.
- Expand and standardize data collection in order to quantify and articulate the reach and impact of the OHS and its members.

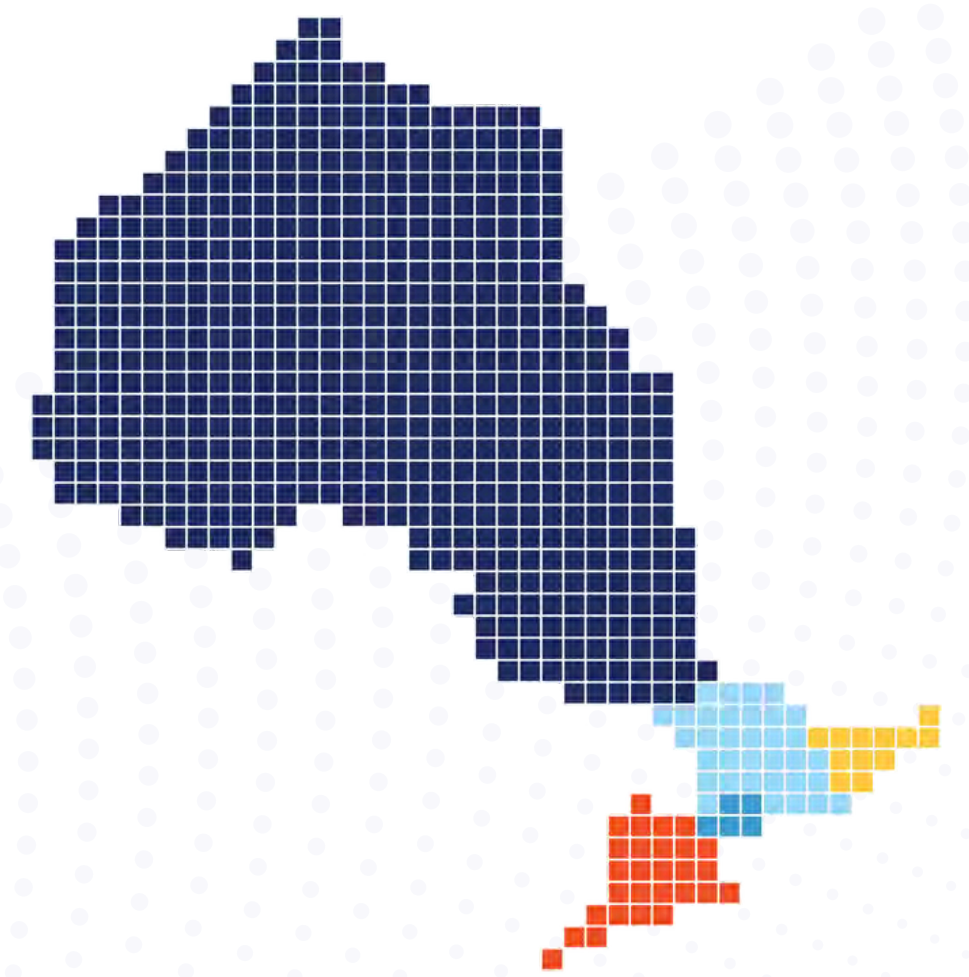
## MEASURING SUCCESS

- Increased membership retention and satisfaction rates.
- Expansion of engagement metrics captured by OHS and its members.
- Development of new revenue stream(s).
- Documented training and succession planning milestones for staff and board.
- Year-over-year growth of evergreen list.
- Increased youth engagement with OHS Board/Committees.
- Year-over-year return on long-term investments.
- Increased attendance and engagement for OHS programs.

*Built in 1913, the historic John McKenzie House serves as the OHS Headquarters. OHS staff and volunteers have developed the property into a unique community programming space.*



# FUNDING STRATEGY



This Strategic Plan is ambitious and will be transformative for the OHS and its membership. In order to execute, it will require a detailed fundraising strategy and plan. The board-led Development Committee is able to support this work, primarily in an advisory role and with limited execution capacity.

To secure the required project funding and develop long-term financial stability, the OHS must be prepared to invest in professional fundraising expertise. This may include hiring a fractional fundraiser, a temporary full-time Development Manager, or a combination of strategic consultants and freelance fundraisers to create a detailed fundraising plan, successfully execute it, and build the processes and relationships needed for lasting financial sustainability and growth.

It is anticipated that the fundraising plan would include analysis, exploration, and pursuit of:

- Corporate partnerships, including donations and sponsorships
- Non-government grants and private foundations
- Individual donor stewardship and expansion of an individual giving program
- Revenue generating programming

Objectives outlined in the strategic plan that will require funding outside of the current OHS operating budget include:

- Capacity Building: workshops, webinars, and access to experts
- Resource Library: development of templates and toolkits
- Design and layout changes to the OHS website
- Revenue Diversification

# CONTACT



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