

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the
Upcoming Federal Budget**

**By the Canadian Society of
Landscape Architects**

**Submitted by Michael Magnan, MArch., BCSLA, AALA, OALA, CSLA
President, Canadian Society of Landscape Architects**

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) calls on the federal government to:

#1: Prioritize funding and establish criteria for housing policies and projects that foster resilient, healthy, safe and complete communities.

#2: Establish active and public transportation network connectivity as a mandatory condition of federal housing and infrastructure funding.

#3: Establish green development standards for all federally funded civil and public infrastructure projects, including requirements for nature-based solutions, carbon accounting, and landscape carbon sequestration.

#4: Formally recognize and engage landscape architects and allied design professionals as essential partners in federal programs relating to housing, infrastructure, climate adaptation, and biodiversity.

About the CSLA and Landscape Architecture

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) is a non-profit, professional organization dedicated to advancing the art, the science, and the practice of landscape architecture in Canada.

Landscape architecture is the profession concerned with the design, planning, management and stewardship of the land and is recognized as a STEM discipline. As stewards of both natural and built environments, landscape architects employ an extensive understanding of ecological systems, sustainability, and spatial analytics to design spaces that bolster community well-being, enhance biodiversity, promote equity and inclusion, and meet the challenges posed by climate change. Landscape architects promote multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to the creation of meaningful, enjoyable environments that accommodate both the needs of society and the natural environment, respecting the cultural landscapes of the past and planning for a sustainable future.

Representing over 3,200 landscape architects, associates/interns and students, the CSLA is committed to promoting and increasing awareness of our profession and advocating for issues such as urban design and renewal, sustainable and socially just communities, and adaptation to climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

On behalf of our membership, the CSLA is pleased to submit the following recommendations as part of the 2026 federal pre-budget consultations.

Recommendation 1: Resilient, Healthy, Safe and Complete Communities

The CSLA welcomes the federal government's commitment to addressing Canada's housing crisis. Every Canadian has the right to affordable, safe housing. The CSLA urges the government to recognize that unit counts alone are an insufficient measure of success. To date, progress on housing has been tracked primarily by the number of units delivered relative to targets, with little monitoring of the affordability, liveability, or long-term sustainability of the homes and communities being created. Unit sizes have continued to shrink, requirements for public open space and green infrastructure have declined, and in some jurisdictions green development standards have been eliminated entirely. There is a persistent mismatch between what is being delivered and the demand for high-quality, livable family communities.

The federal government has a direct opportunity to model a different approach. The [Port Lands Flood Protection Project](#) in Toronto demonstrates how a landscape-led investment in natural infrastructure can simultaneously protect 290 hectares from flooding, deliver 25 hectares of new parkland, and unlock development opportunities for 14,000 new homes, 100,000 skilled trade jobs, and \$13.2 billion in economic development. Similarly, the Canada Lands Company projects such as [Downsview](#) in Toronto and the [Jericho Lands](#) in Vancouver offer further proof that landscape-integrated, sustainability-first community development is not only achievable but economically compelling. These projects demonstrate what federally supported housing can and should look like.

While the housing crisis demands building development, we must not treat urban green spaces as optional amenities. They maintain biodiversity, improve air and water quality, mitigate flood risk, reduce urban heat, and support the mental and physical health of residents across Canadian cities. [Children living in less-green neighbourhoods are between 15 and 55 percent more likely to develop mental health issues in adulthood](#), a burden that falls disproportionately on lower-income, racialized, and Indigenous communities. Access to nature is a social determinant of health, and it must be treated as such in federal housing policy.

The CSLA also urges the government to establish clear siting criteria for federally funded housing. Provincial and local governments have persistently failed to prevent new development in known high risk areas, including floodplains and coastal zones subject to storm surge and sea level rise. The costs of these decisions are ultimately borne by governments at all levels through disaster relief funding and by homeowners through rising insurance costs. The federal government can and should establish that all housing receiving federal support meets a minimum standard that addresses known climate hazards. Federally funded communities should set the standard for housing development across the country.

Recommendation 2: Active and Public Transportation are Essential Infrastructure

Canada's housing crisis cannot be resolved by building homes alone. The liveability of any housing development depends on its connection to the services, employment, schools, and public spaces that make a community function. Yet federal housing policy has focused primarily on the delivery of units, with insufficient attention to the mobility infrastructure that determines whether those units become part of a functioning community or an isolated development that increases car dependence and compounds long-term infrastructure costs.

People do not choose to walk, cycle, or take transit in the absence of safe, well-designed, and well-connected infrastructure to support those choices. A strategy that promotes sustainable transportation without requiring the design and delivery of sustainable transportation networks will not achieve its objectives. The most effective active transportation investments are not simply trails or bike lanes in isolation, they are integrated landscape systems that are safe, accessible, and designed to make active mobility not just possible but desirable.

Unfortunately, provincial governments have demonstrated a willingness to override municipal active transportation decisions and investments, and if the federal government can protect and require investment in it, sustainable mobility networks will remain safe from political reversal. Federal funding conditions represent one of the most powerful levers available to ensure that transportation infrastructure is delivered alongside housing, rather than deferred indefinitely.

The [Saint-Laurent Biodiversity Corridor](#) in Montréal demonstrates what is possible when active transportation and ecological connectivity are pursued together. This 450-hectare, landscape-led master plan transforms underutilized land beneath major power lines and along industrial corridors into a continuous network of pedestrian paths, cycling infrastructure, native plantings, and stormwater management systems. The project simultaneously restores biodiversity, reduces urban heat, and connects residents to parks, green space, and the broader city. Projects like this demonstrate that active transportation infrastructure can deliver mobility, ecological, and community health benefits within a single investment.

Establishing active and public transportation connectivity as a mandatory condition of federal housing and infrastructure funding would ensure that Canada's investment in housing delivers not just units, but complete communities.

Recommendation 3: Green Development Standards for Federally Funded Infrastructure

The Government of Canada has already recognized that sustainability and climate resilience are not optional enhancements to infrastructure investment. Programs such as the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Build Communities Strong Fund, and the Canada Public Transit Fund require projects to demonstrate alignment with sustainability and climate resilience criteria as conditions of funding eligibility. The effectiveness of these programs depends on a coherent and consistent framework that defines what those criteria mean in practice and applies them consistently across all federally funded civil and public infrastructure projects. That framework does not yet exist.

At the provincial level, there is active pressure to roll back municipal green development standards that implement sustainability commitments into site-level design requirements. When provincial governments remove mandatory standards, costs are deferred, not eliminated. The actual costs will eventually fall on municipalities and future homeowners through expensive retrofits. For example, Ontario municipalities already face a \$52-billion infrastructure deficit, much of it in stormwater and climate-vulnerable assets. Meanwhile, the evidence for the value of green infrastructure is clear: it can be built for 5 to 30 percent less and maintained for 25 percent less than comparable grey infrastructure, and every dollar invested in nature-based adaptation yields approximately four dollars in avoided losses.

Furthermore, the built environment accounts for over 14 percent of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, yet streets, parks, stormwater systems, and other public infrastructure are systematically excluded from carbon accounting frameworks. Landscape architects make consequential design decisions about materials, soil systems, and plant assemblies that determine the carbon intensity of every project they deliver. Vegetation and soils actively sequester carbon over time, the only mechanism through which a development project can move beyond net zero to become genuinely carbon positive. [The Landscape Carbon Benchmarking Study](#), commissioned by the City of Toronto, provides a practical and defensible framework that other orders of government can adopt. Federal leadership in this area, through extending the Standard on Embodied Carbon in Construction, which currently applies to applicable federal building projects, to explicitly include public realm and landscape infrastructure projects as well, would drive adoption across jurisdictions and ensure that Canada's infrastructure investments contribute meaningfully to its net-zero commitments.

The federal government has an opportunity to establish a standard for the country. Binding green development standards as a non-negotiable condition of federal infrastructure funding, paired with carbon accounting requirements that capture both embodied emissions and sequestration potential in landscape and public realm infrastructure, would provide the consistency and certainty that industry needs, protect the public health and fiscal safeguards that mandatory standards currently provide, and ensure that federally funded communities deliver long-term value rather than deferred liability.

Recommendation 4: Landscape Architects and Allied Design Professionals as Essential Partners

Delivering on Canada's housing, infrastructure, climate adaptation, and biodiversity commitments depends not only on the policies established, but on the professionals engaged to implement them. Landscape architects, planners, architects, and engineers are the professionals who realize federal policy commitments within the built environment at every scale, from the design of individual sites to the planning of regional ecological networks. Yet planning and design professions are consistently absent from the lists of implementation partners identified in federal strategies and programs. The recent proposal to dissolve the [Federal / Industry Real Property Advisory Council \(FIRPAC\)](#), through which federal and construction industry partners have collaborated since 2019, moves further in the wrong direction.

This absence has consequences. When procurement processes prioritize cost and speed over quality, innovation, and sustainability, the result is infrastructure that meets minimum standards at the time of construction but fails communities over the long term. When design professionals are not engaged at the policy development stage, the result is strategies that promote sustainable outcomes without establishing the professional and regulatory frameworks needed to require and deliver them. And when federal programs do not explicitly recognize the role of planning and design professionals in climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and biodiversity restoration, opportunities to leverage existing professional expertise and capacity are lost.

Canada's National Adaptation Strategy sets a target that by 2027, 70 percent of members of relevant professional associations, including landscape architects, have the capacity to apply climate change adaptation tools and communicate the business case for adaptation to their clients. To help meet that target, and with support from Natural Resources Canada's Climate Adaptation Program the CSLA's [landADAPT](#) program has delivered 16 webinars reaching 300-500 learners each session, 12 case studies, and an online course developed in collaboration with the Climate Risk Institute launching this spring. This work has also supported interdisciplinary collaboration through NRCan's Adaptation Skills Working Group and related NRCan-funded initiatives to define professional climate competencies and review university curricula across allied disciplines.

Landscape architects are already delivering the work that federal programs seek to support. The projects referenced throughout this submission — from the Port Lands Flood Protection Project to the Saint-Laurent Biodiversity Corridor to the Landscape Carbon Benchmarking Study — demonstrate the breadth and depth of the profession's contribution to resilient, sustainable, and livable communities. Formally recognizing landscape architects and allied design professionals as implementation partners, and funding opportunities for continued collaboration between professional associations and government, would ensure that Canada's federal investments are delivered by the professionals best positioned to achieve their intended outcomes.