

# 2024 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

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

**#1: Increase investment and support for ecosystem conservation and restoration, and promote planning and design that benefits and sustains both ecosystems and society.**

**#2: Allocate resources to promote nature-based solutions as a practical, effective, and sustainable approach to address climate adaptation in the built environment.**

**#3: Provide and plan for adequate housing in support of sustainable development goals by recognizing the importance of natural systems and green spaces to community health, well-being and resilience.**

**#4: Invest in policies and initiatives that promote reconciliation, justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the built environment to ensure that all communities have access to high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive public spaces.**

**#5: Invest in employment and training opportunities, and improve procurement processes to build capacity within the profession of landscape architecture and related fields.**

## About the CSLA and Landscape Architecture

The CSLA is a non-profit, professional organization dedicated to advancing the art, the science, and the practice of landscape architecture in Canada. Representing over 3,200 landscape architects, associates/interns and landscape architecture students, the CSLA is committed to promoting and increasing awareness of our profession and advocating for issues such as urban design and renewal, parks and greenspace planning, Indigenous issues, sustainable and socially just communities, climate change, protected landscapes, and cultural heritage.

Landscape architects promote multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to the creation of meaningful, enjoyable human environments, and to the sustainability of natural ecosystems and special places. Landscape architects work to accommodate both the needs of human society and the natural environment, respecting the cultural landscapes of the past, and planning sustainably for the future.

On behalf of our membership, the CSLA is pleased to submit the following recommendations as part of the 2024 federal pre-budget consultations. We believe that these recommendations will provide a blueprint for the conservation of nature, ensuring the reliability of ecosystem services, and providing for equity and well-being across Canadian communities.

## Recommendations

### **#1: Increase investment and support for ecosystem conservation and restoration, and promote planning and design that benefits and sustains both ecosystems and society.**

The CSLA is deeply concerned about the ongoing deterioration in Canadian ecosystems, exacerbated by the escalating threats from global warming. Unless transformative changes are made by society, we will continue to erode the foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health, and the quality of life worldwide.

We are proud of Canada's recent commitment to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework which aims to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas. However to reach this goal, Canada must increase investment and support for ecosystem conservation and restoration over the next decade.

Landscape architects work to protect the wild and to promote planning and design that benefits and sustains both ecosystems and society. We recognize the economic, ecological and social services that natural assets contribute to our communities. Landscape architecture applies federal government funding programs to achieve ecosystem projects that benefit regional, national and international conservation targets.

Landscape architects have expertise in designing with nature and are uniquely positioned to lead conservation and restoration efforts. A few well-known examples of projects involving Canadian landscape architects include: the creation of [Agguttinni Uumajunut Pimmariuninginnut](#) (Territorial Park), recipient of the Canada Nature Fund Target 1 Challenge; the [Environmental Master Plan for Parkland County](#); and the [Ecological Restoration Plan of Roper Regional Westland](#), Edmonton.

## **#2: Allocate resources to promote nature-based solutions as a practical, effective, and sustainable approach to address climate adaptation in the built environment.**

Nature-based solutions (NbS) include the design and implementation of green infrastructure, restoration of degraded ecosystems, and the integration of natural elements into urban environments. The CSLA believes that NbS are an integral tool in the battle to reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions, to ensure sustainability in environments and to increase the resilience of Canadian communities. However, not all attempts to 'green' the built environment can be considered a NbS which uses the power of functioning ecosystems as the infrastructure upon which to provide or enhance natural services that benefit society and the environment.

The profession of landscape architecture bridges the gap between the natural and the built environment by designing with nature. This approach to planning, design and management is not new to landscape architects. As a field rooted in the natural, physical, and human sciences, landscape architects develop innovative solutions to design challenges.

The CSLA believes that NbS offer innovative opportunities to meaningfully address multiple sustainability crises (e.g., climate change, food and water security, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, human well-being, and natural disasters). Recent climate-related events have underscored the importance of this approach. For instance, landscape architects have been involved in the restoration of the coastlines and parks in Atlantic Canada following devastating hurricanes, and in Alberta they contributed to the recovery and resilience planning after the flooding of the Bow River.

These projects and others demonstrate the critical role of landscape architects in responding to the climate crisis and in building more resilient communities. However, to fully leverage the potential of landscape architecture and NbS, additional resources are necessary. We need to promote NbS as the standard practice for practical, effective, and sustainable alternatives to established urban and rural development in Canada. This includes funding for research, technical assistance, and incentive programs.

A few well-known examples of projects that incorporate NbS strategies involving Canadian landscape architects include: Bring Back the Don / [Don Mouth Naturalization](#) and the [Port Lands](#) Flood Protection Project, Toronto; [The Forks](#), Winnipeg; [Dale Hodges Park](#) on the Bow River, Calgary; and the [Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant and Regional Park Project](#).

**#3: Provide and plan for adequate housing in support of sustainable development goals by recognizing the importance of natural systems and green spaces to community health, well-being and resilience.**

The CSLA acknowledges the current housing crisis in Canada and urges the government to respond by providing and planning for adequate housing in support of sustainable development goals and the creation of resilient communities. Encroaching on greenspace and impairing ecosystems is not a sustainable practice and careful scientific analysis and planning are required to understand the impacts of removing lands from protected status for development.

Our country's natural heritage systems play an ever more important role and provide benefits such as:

- providing essential habitat to maintain biodiversity
- improving air and water quality
- recharging aquifers
- mitigating and attenuating flood risks
- improving our mental and physical health
- contributing to food sovereignty and security

Today, we face rapid environmental changes and an epidemic of non-communicable diseases with risk factors including physical inactivity, air pollution, mental health issues and unhealthy diets. Landscape architects possess the skills to positively impact the natural and built environments to address public health issues in Canadian communities.

New approaches to planning and development strategies are required to achieve housing security and sustainability for future generations. This includes promoting compact, mixed-use development; preserving and enhancing green spaces; and integrating NbS into urban design.

Landscape architects recognize the importance of managing growth and development. Ensuring that our housing needs are balanced with environmental and society needs requires innovative approaches that do not perpetuate harm or create a crisis for future generations. We urge the government to address Canada's housing crisis without impairing natural environments or encroaching on protected greenspace.

A few well-known examples of projects involving Canadian landscape architects include: the renewal of [Les Habitations de Saint-Michel Nord](#), Montreal; and merging foreshore restoration with ambitious development plans in the [Vancouver Waterfront Park](#).

To read more about the health benefits of nature in the City, see the CSLA's [Nature Note](#).

**#4: Invest in policies and initiatives that promote reconciliation, justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the built environment to ensure that all communities have access to high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive public spaces.**

Landscape architects have the power to design places that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion and we recognize that design which ignores those values can bring harm to Indigenous, Black, and other racialized people in Canada. Systemic racism in the built environment has taken many forms, including redlining, gentrification, and disinvestment. Environmental injustices, including lack of equitable access to clean air and water, prevalence of urban heat islands, and greater concentrations of pollution continue to plague these communities.

Landscape architects work with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities across the country. Incorporation and consideration of Indigenous peoples, their values, their voices, and their knowledge in the planning, design and management of the Canadian landscape is an important goal for our membership, and essential to achieving reconciliation. The government must provide financial support to Indigenous communities and governments in habitat management and restoration, land and ocean management, and carbon stewardship through environmental programs. Many of these conservation initiatives have incorporated landscape architectural expertise and facilitation.

Landscape architects create inclusive spaces that reflect and celebrate the diverse cultures and histories of our communities and respect the rights and cultures of all people. Investment into policies and initiatives that promote justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the built environment are necessary. This includes supporting the development of inclusive and culturally sensitive design guidelines and ensuring that all communities have access to high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive public spaces.

A few well-known examples of projects involving Canadian landscape architects include: [The Indigenous Peoples Garden](#) at Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg; [Rainbow Park](#) (sθəqəlxenəm ts'exwts'áxwi7), Vancouver; [Top of the World Highway](#) connecting Dawson, Yukon and Alaska across Traditional Territory of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in; and, [18 Shades of Gay](#), Montreal.

## **#5: Invest in employment and training opportunities, and improve procurement to build capacity within the profession of landscape architecture and related fields.**

The Government of Canada recently launched the National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) in partnership with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners across Canada. As one of the relevant professions identified in the NAS (See, p. 29), the CSLA acknowledges that landscape architects have a responsibility to contribute to climate adaptation across all five systems including: disaster resilience, health and well-being, nature and biodiversity, infrastructure, and economy and workers.

To meet the target set in the NAS the CSLA will seek partnerships with our allied professions and we will continue to support our members in the implementation of adaptation strategies, in communicating the importance of these actions with clients, and in advocating for the inclusion of landscape architects in adaptation projects at all scales.

In turn, we require further investment in training and capacity building within our profession. Our members require access to up-to-date climate change and adaptation related data, training materials and resources that consider core competencies as well as those specific to our design profession. We also need further opportunities to report on the lessons learned through peer-to-peer collaborations and publications. Despite the innovative and large-scale nature of projects designed and implemented through professional practice, these types of projects are generally excluded from research and case study analyses because budgets rarely allow for it. Further funding for infrastructure projects is necessary to support communities through the full cycle of adaptation, for which ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting are critical.

We also urge the government to review and revise procurement processes to better recognize and value the unique contributions of landscape architecture. Currently, procurement processes often prioritize cost and speed over quality, innovation and sustainability. We recommend the adoption of procurement practices that explicitly value the environmental, social, and economic benefits of sustainable design, and that encourage the inclusion of landscape architects in multidisciplinary teams. By doing so, the government can ensure that public projects not only meet immediate needs, but also contribute to long-term goals of environmental sustainability, social equity, and community resilience.

A few well-known examples of climate adaptation and research oriented projects involving Canadian landscape architects include: [Calgary's Downtown Flood Barrier](#); Prince Edward Island's [Coastal Hazards Information Platform \(CHIP\)](#); and the [The Fraser River Delta Collaborative](#).