



CSLA Statement in Response to: *A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature*

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A Profession Built for This Moment

The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA), representing over 3,200 landscape architects, associates, and students across Canada, welcomes the release of *A Force of Nature: Canada's Strategy to Protect Nature*. With its commitment of \$3.8 billion and a target to protect 30% of Canada's lands and waters by 2030, this strategy represents a necessary step toward halting and reversing the biodiversity crisis threatening the natural systems on which all life depends.

The three pillars of *A Force of Nature*—protecting nature, building Canada well, and valuing and mobilizing capital for nature—reflect a vision that landscape architects live and practice every day. Our profession works at the intersection of the natural and built environments, interpreting ecological science and translating it into designed environments that are functional, regenerative, and beautiful. We are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between conservation policy and implementation in wilderness areas, working landscapes, and in the heart of Canadian cities.

Pillar 1: Protecting Nature

The CSLA strongly supports the strategy's commitment to expand protected areas and advance Indigenous-led stewardship and conservation programs. Landscape architects have long partnered with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the planning, design, and stewardship of landscapes.

While expanding the area of protected lands and waters is necessary, protection alone is not sufficient. The CSLA urges the government to prioritize the identification of ecologically vulnerable lands and waters, and areas of high ecological value, to ensure that conservation efforts are targeted where they are most urgently needed, and that habitat connectivity is maintained.

We also wish to highlight the critical role of urban nature. Canada's commitment to 15 new national urban parks is encouraging, but biodiversity does not stop at national park limits. Urban ecosystems include streetscapes, recreational parks, greenways, wetlands, urban forests, and waterways, all of which provide vital habitat connectivity, support human health and well-being, and represent for many Canadians their most immediate connection to the natural world. The CSLA urges the government to ensure that urban nature receives the same rigorous attention as wilderness areas, and that landscape architects are recognized as essential partners in designing and restoring these ecosystems.

Pillar 2: Building Canada Well

We are encouraged that Pillar 2 directly acknowledges nature-based solutions (NbS) as a key tool for climate adaptation and mitigation. NbS, including green infrastructure projects such as living shorelines, constructed wetlands, and enhanced urban tree canopy, are practical, evidence-based tools landscape architects bring to every project, at every scale.

We are concerned, however, that Pillar 2 currently reads more as a framework for managing development than as a mandate for fundamentally building better. In order for infrastructure to work with nature, nature must be embedded in the planning and design process from the outset.

Landscape architects believe that the materials specified, the stormwater managed, the soil preserved, and the habitat connectivity maintained, are all aspects of development that are as important as where Canada builds. The forthcoming comprehensive mapping and Key Biodiversity Area data are welcome, but data alone will not change development patterns. We recommend that this information be integrated into land use planning and development approvals at all levels of government. The CSLA offers our expertise to inform the development of national green standards and design guidance to embed nature-positive outcomes across the full range of development activity.

The CSLA also strongly encourages the federal government to support municipalities on the integration of green development standards and nature-positive requirements in their development regulations and approval processes. Canada can learn from existing international models, such as the United Kingdom's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which mandates measurable ecological improvements as a condition of development approval, an approach with strong potential for application in the Canadian context.

The strategy rightly notes that nature is one of Canada's most effective flood-protection systems, yet it stops short of committing to improved climate adaptation measures within planning and development frameworks. The CSLA calls on the government to address this gap explicitly, ensuring that adaptation outcomes are embedded as requirements, not afterthoughts, in infrastructure planning and approvals at all levels of government.

This is particularly important for programs such as the Build Communities Strong Fund, which represents a significant federal investment in the development of community infrastructure. The CSLA calls on the government to ensure that this and other major funding streams explicitly align with the pillars of the Nature Strategy: to prioritize nature-based solutions, require nature-positive decision-making in project proposals, and embed minimum green standards as conditions of funding.

Pillar 3: Valuing Nature and Mobilizing Capital

The CSLA welcomes the commitment to launch an Expert Taskforce on Natural Capital Accounting and Nature Financing. However, beyond investment and financing mechanisms, the value of nature must also include its impacts on human health, social cohesion, psychological well-being, and the reduction of long-term maintenance and infrastructure costs, values that remain chronically underquantified and underrepresented in public decision-making. The Taskforce should consider leading international frameworks such as the [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\)](#) and the targets of the [Nature Positive Initiative](#). The CSLA encourages the government to develop monitoring frameworks that capture these co-benefits and accessible tools that help municipalities, developers, and project proponents integrate natural asset value into early-stage planning and design decisions.

A Call to Partner

A Force of Nature is a strong declaration of intent, and its success depends on implementation by professionals and communities who translate policy into places. Our members can contribute scientific literacy, design creativity, ecological expertise, and a deep commitment to reconciliation and sustainability. We look forward to working with the federal government, Indigenous Peoples, allied professions, and communities to turn these ambitions into on-the-ground results.

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.

Further Information

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