

2021 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

Restarting the Canadian economy, as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

- 1) Prioritize stimulus funding that rejuvenates and expands the public common – those public spaces that create healthy and livable communities including parks, green spaces, greenways, recreational fields, plazas, waterfronts, renewed streets, community centres and more.
- 2) Incorporate natural assets in infrastructure spending by prioritizing projects where the natural environment and the built environment are considered by collaborative teams of professionals (landscape architects, planners, engineers, among others).
- 3) Invest in the protection of forests and areas of high ecological value, enhance urban tree canopy, plant native species, and support the development of urban and community gardens and farms to ensure sustainable, healthy environments, food security and job creation.
- 4) Invest in workplace support and professional services, education and employment for young professionals, training for workplace development in small and medium-sized businesses to ensure a sustained recovery, employment, and a more resilient labour force.
- 5) Incorporate financial support and inclusionary processes in each community to ensure social inclusion in decision-making across the country so that people in remote communities, urban inner-cities, suburbs, and rural parts of Canada, can be involved in decisions regarding what their community requires for a sustained recovery.
- 6) Support Indigenous communities and first nations governments in habitat restoration, land and ocean management, and carbon stewardship through continued investment in existing programs and the creation of a conservation economy.

Introduction

The CSLA thanks the Committee for providing this opportunity to discuss how we can work together to restart the Canadian economy as we recover from COVID-19. As noted, the pandemic is not over, but we are in a period of transition that will lead to recovery – one that the CSLA believes can increase the resilience and long-term sustainability for our communities, our country and our planet.

About the CSLA and Landscape Architecture

The CSLA was founded in 1934 and is the voice of more than 2,800 landscape architects across Canada. As the voice of the profession, the CSLA is an advocate for its members on matters including urban design and renewal, parks and greenspace planning, Indigenous issues, sustainable and socially just communities, and climate change.

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. Landscape architects play an integral role in the processes of planning, design and management of outdoor spaces of all sizes – from small urban courtyards to National Parks. We aim to mitigate the contribution of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, promote ingenuity and resilience in individuals and organizations, and ensure the sustainability of our natural environment.

The work of landscape architects touches many aspects of the Canadian economy and its growth. Nationally, the estimated GDP contribution from landscape architecture in 2014 – figures which we are currently updating – was over \$1 billion and has typically grown by over 10 per cent annually. Economic activity in the landscape architecture industry has a multiplier effect nationally of 2.1, meaning that every dollar input into landscape architecture generates \$2.10 of economic activity. Every \$1 million in landscape architecture project expenditures creates 12.83 jobs nationally.

There are more than 850 landscape architectural firms in Canada, most of them small and medium-sized businesses. The economic activity in the landscape architecture profession will only increase as we advance design that works to ensure healthy communities. Like many other professional organizations, the CSLA is carefully monitoring the impact of the pandemic on our membership and will continue to do so as the recovery progresses.

The pandemic has shown us that Canada can harness its resources in an emergency, identify areas that are hard-hit, and move swiftly to inject supports. The CSLA believes the pandemic has also demonstrated that we can do things differently to meet another, longer-term emergency – that of climate change and the need to meet net zero targets to adapt our communities for the inevitable.

Rationale for Recommendations – Pandemic Recovery and Livable Communities

COVID-19 has changed how we live and think about public spaces in our communities. Behaviours are changing: more people are riding bikes, walking, and exploring other alternative modes; more people are working remotely and will continue to do so; many of us are re-considering the importance of travel; many of us now acutely recognize the importance of healthy public spaces, local businesses, of access to and support for local food systems, of gardening and more. Many of us have simplified how we live and are prioritizing access to green spaces.

As noted in the six recommendations above, the CSLA believes that a sustainable recovery is a green recovery and includes investments in natural infrastructure and public spaces; in nature and biodiversity; in training, workplace development and in small and medium enterprises; and in Indigenous communities. Such investments will stimulate the economic recovery and will create jobs as we recover from the pandemic and build resilience for a sustainable, healthier future.

According to a recently [published report by the World Economic Forum](#), economic recovery efforts post-COVID-19 must address climate change and nature loss, and stimulus packages must be geared to “build back better”. The report emphasizes that nature-based and sustainable practices could create more than 395 million jobs globally by 2030 and more than \$10 trillion in annual business value over the next decade.

[In late April a poll conducted by Ipsos](#) found that 84 per cent of Canadians support a government recovery plan that “prioritizes investment in green sustainable industries”.

The CSLA believes that while COVID-19 is uncovering severe deficiencies in our society, it is also showing us a path to economic recovery that will help us to achieve a healthier, more resilient, way of living, if we pay heed.

Whether we are dealing with the short-term emergency of this pandemic or the deeper and longer-term climate change emergency, more and more studies are showing that both a government-led recovery to COVID-19 and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts require investments in sustainable practices. Those practices include creating healthy spaces, renewing public infrastructure, and applying solutions based on natural and nature-based infrastructure (e.g., green roofs, green parking areas, natural drainage basins). Research outcomes and innovation funding in these areas of green technologies and site implementation are pressing needs that should continue through federal inputs.

A [May 20 letter to the Prime Minister](#), signed by more than 40 membership-based and non-profit organizations, including the CSLA, clearly states the importance of our natural infrastructure in recovery efforts:

“Natural infrastructure projects create good jobs, support local supply chains, and provide a variety of environmental, social, and health benefits. Natural infrastructure can also reduce capital and operating costs for municipalities and Indigenous communities to provide essential services. Support for natural infrastructure solutions as part of a post-COVID green recovery stimulus would help to realize all of these benefits, as well as meeting specific mandates across several federal departments, including Infrastructure, Environment and Climate Change, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Public Safety. The case is strong for the value these solutions hold both in advancing climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, enhanced biodiversity and supporting economic recovery.

....Beyond the size of the sector, natural infrastructure efforts require the collaboration of a diversity of partners including: municipal planners, landscape architects, engineers, biologists, farmers, non-governmental organizations and academics (to name just a few). This diversity of partners also reflects the diversity of employment opportunities from design, to project management, to site construction, to horticulture, and long term maintenance, evaluation and monitoring.”

Several studies and sources included in this letter show that the economic and social benefits of incorporating natural and nature-based solutions far outweigh those of a more traditional approach and can have a high economic multiplier effect. As well, according to a 2020 report by the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, every \$1 invested in climate adaptation has a potential return of \$6 in future avoided losses.

Landscape architects are well-prepared to participate in a green recovery

Landscape architects are advocates for an ecosystem-based approach to policy, planning, design, and decision-making. The federal government is the level of government best equipped to provide the resources required to support all communities and levels of government in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing toward a low carbon economy.

The talent and skill of our landscape architectural professionals can be seen in the public realm on prominent projects in every major city, province and territory in the country. To name a few one has only to look at award winning initiatives such as: the Port lands community revitalization on the Toronto waterfront; and the Forks river and floodway renewal in Winnipeg. These multimillion-dollar investments have taken place over the last decade with infusions of federal funding and have involved the creative leadership of landscape architects and urban designers who are committed to urban renewal, urban ecological restoration and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Recently there have been several award-winning projects recognizing the work of landscape architects within collaborative work teams on the City of Vancouver's innovative Rain City Strategy, a Green Rainwater Infrastructure and Management Initiative. As well, in Scarborough, the Meadoway is transforming a 16-kilometre hydro corridor into one of the largest linear urban greenspaces in Canada where recreational spaces, walking and biking paths, community gardens, and native plant species will take the place of empty spaces of monocultural grass. These are only a few of the high quality landscape architectural projects that will address social needs, community health and resilience, all the while creating employment and addressing climate change.

There are many more of these projects needed in the economic transition and recovery phases from COVID-19 – developments that engage community's in decision-making, respect cultural and Indigenous leadership on ancestral lands and engender a commitment to healthy, useful, enjoyable, climate-ready spaces. There are many more examples in the [CSLA Livable Communities](#) document referenced here, including roof top urban farms that support local populations with locally grown produce; interior and exterior green walls; parks; planting of native species in urban streetscapes and forests; coastal rejuvenation; stormwater management; pathways and streetscapes that encourage green mobility and spacing. A green recovery will depend on challenging many current practices to ensure we build and plan better to enhance public and private spaces, urban renewal and prioritize health.

In conclusion, the CSLA believes these recommendations will recognize the emergencies we currently face and support both the economic recovery from COVID-19, as well as climate change adaptation and net-zero targets. These crucial actions will go a long way to ensuring that Canada maximizes its resources in these challenging times.

References

[The Future of Nature and Business is published by the World Economic Forum
Letter to the Prime Minister](#)

[Livable Communities published by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects](#)