

About the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA)

The BCSLA was formed in 1964 under the Society Act, and was incorporated as a self-governing professional association under the Architects (Landscape) Act in 1968. The objects of the BCSLA are:

- a. to uphold public health, safety and welfare as it relates to the professional practice of landscape architecture in British Columbia;
- b. to nurture and further the professional application of landscape architectural knowledge and technique as it relates to the planning, design, development, preservation, protection, restoration, reclamation, rehabilitation, enhancement and management of the environment;
- c. to advance landscape architectural knowledge and technique;
- d. to further and maintain proper standards of professional landscape architectural practice in British Columbia.

To attain registered status and use of the title in BC, a prospective landscape architect:

1. Earns an accredited professional degree; an undergraduate program (BLA) or masters of landscape architecture (MLA). These programs are offered at six universities across Canada, with two more in the process of establishing accreditation.
2. Successfully completes a written exam prepared and scored by the Council of Landscape Architectural Examinations Board (CLARB) to establish sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to provide services that protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. The content of the Landscape Architectural Registration Exam (LARE) is based on the results of a scientific “job analysis” survey conducted every five to seven years, with 5548 practicing landscape architects from the United States and Canada participating in the 2016 survey. Survey results are analyzed by licensed landscape architects who represent the diversity (both areas of practice and geographic) of the profession.
The LARE is made up of the following:
Section 1: Project and Construction Management
Section 2: Inventory and Analysis
Section 3: Design
Section 4: Grading, Drainage and Construction Documentation
3. Completes a two-year internship with detailed documentation.
4. Passes an oral examination that covers legal and ethical requirements for professional practice within the context of local legislation such as the Builder’s Lien Act (1997). Four BCSLA Board of Examiners are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

After attaining registration, landscape architects in BC are required to meet the requirements of a mandatory Continuing Education program, and an established disciplinary process which is brought into force when standards of practice are not met. Beyond this, our organization works with its members, relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure that standards of practice are kept up to date in areas such as site planning, grading and drainage plans, tree management, planting design, soil specifications, and maintenance.

What is working well with the Current Professional Reliance Model?

- It promotes the idea that society can and should rely on the resource management professions and their professionals;
- It has given professionals a chance to working directly with the public to create site-specific, innovative solutions to land development problems;
- It has reduced the administrative burden.

What changes are Needed?

Comprehensive Planning in the face of Climate Change

Base natural resource legislation for resource planning and management on an iterative model of sustainable resource management. It is imperative that such statutes and regulations be revised on a regular basis to respond to climate change and other factors that impact the environment. Landscape architects work in land planning and site development at a range of scales, and our practice directly benefits from over-arching legislation that supports sustainability and land-use planning. Whether it is a regional park, a condominium project, or an urban plaza, environmental regulations and professional reliance play an important role in protecting our natural capital.

Conduct Independent Audits

Strengthening of specific regulations that protect the natural environment, and which include requirements for Qualified Professionals, government oversight, and shared practice guidelines. To meet these goals, we support the establishment of a Natural Resources Practices Board to carry out independent audits that document compliance with environmental regulations.

A Single Ministry

Create a ministry that self-regulating professional associations report through to:

- Establish closer ties between the government and the associations;
- Strengthen the links between the professions, and;
- Improve government oversight so best practices can be shared.

Annual Reporting

Develop a format for annual reporting to the provincial government that addresses critical elements required for a self-regulating profession. Such reports should be available to the public.

Keeping Legislation Up to Date

Introduce amendments to the Architects (Landscape) Act to increase the ability of the BCSLA to act as an effective regulator in protecting both the public interest and the environment. We welcome the opportunity to meet with the Minister to discuss such improvements and their value to the professional reliance model.

Ensure that Qualified Professionals can deliver their expertise within the Professional Reliance system

Include Registered Landscape Architects as Qualified Environmental Professionals. The rationale is that:

- Production of comprehensive technical drawings that document proposed changes to biophysical systems is a core competency of landscape architects;
- Landscape architects work collaboratively with consultant teams to integrate built elements into the natural environment;
- Landscape architects' education, experience and ethics are aligned with the requirements of the Riparian Area Regulation.

Accountability

Mandate mechanisms for accountability for all participants in the professional reliance system. These would include consequences if performance is unacceptable, and transparency to improve public trust and confidence.

Dialogue

Establish a forum where government, clients and resource professions meet to maintain a dialogue on professional reliance.

Conclusions

The BC Society of Landscape Architects is pleased to be asked to contribute to government's review of the professional reliance model. As the regulator of title for landscape architects in the province of BC, we actively support responsible professional practice in the interests of public safety and welfare. The BCSLA is dedicated to ongoing professional development and professional accountability, and we look forward to building on our current set of regulatory tools.

We especially look forward to engaging in follow up discussions, and will keep our members apprised on any changes that come forward as a result.