



Ontario Association of
Landscape Architects

A component organization of the
Canadian Society of Landscape Architects

May 4, 2026

Hon. Rob Flack, MPP
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto, On M7A 2J3

Submitted by email: PlanningConsultation@ontario.ca

Re: ERO 026-0300 and ERO 026-0309 — Bill 98, the Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026

Dear Minister Flack,

The Ontario Association of Landscape Architects (OALA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on Bill 98, the *Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026*, with specific reference to proposed changes to the Planning Act, Building Code Act, City of Toronto Act, and Municipal Act (ERO 026-0300) to prohibit mandatory Municipal Enhanced Development Standards and Green Building Standards at the lot level, to remove references to “sustainable design” from site plan control, and further to prohibit mandatory Enhanced Development Standards as a condition of land division approvals (ERO 026-0309).

We recognize and share the Government of Ontario's goals to accelerate housing delivery and reduce unnecessary approval delays. Our members are directly engaged in delivering these goals daily, working at the intersection of natural systems, built infrastructure, and community design to create places that are not only efficient to build, but safe and healthy to live in. Landscape architects are the professionals most directly responsible for the site-level work affected by EROs 026-0300 and 026-0309: stormwater management, urban forestry, green roofs, permeable surfaces, mobility corridors, and climate-resilient public realm design. These are not peripheral or cosmetic considerations; they are core professional services that determine whether new communities and developments function safely and are cost-effective over time.

Above all, our professional mandate is to serve and protect the public interest. It is on this basis that we write to express serious concerns about the proposed removal of mandatory Enhanced Development Standards (EDS).

Promoting, improving and advancing the profession of landscape architecture and maintaining standards of professional practice and conduct, consistent with the need to serve and to protect the public interest.



The Proposed Changes Work Against Ontario's Priorities

Sustainable design is not a trend or an optional enhancement. It is the foundational framework through which planning and design professionals integrate environmental, social, and economic performance into the built environment. Removing references to "sustainable design" from site plan control does not eliminate the practice; it removes the professional and regulatory language that gives municipalities the authority to require it. Every major infrastructure investment program, including the [Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund](#), [Build Communities Strong Fund](#), and the [Canada Public Transit Fund](#) requires projects to demonstrate alignment with sustainability and climate resilience criteria as conditions of funding eligibility. A provincial planning framework that has excised "sustainable design" from its vocabulary will be increasingly misaligned with the federal partnerships Ontario depends on to deliver the very housing and infrastructure this legislation seeks to advance.

Furthermore, based on established evidence and the professional experience of our members, the proposed Bill and regulatory changes will:

1. **Increase long-term costs for developers, property owners, and all levels of government.** The green infrastructure sector delivers \$4.64 billion in direct GDP and over 84,000 direct jobs in Ontario (GIOG, 2022). Green infrastructure can be built for 5–30% less and maintained for 25% less than comparable grey infrastructure. Every \$1 invested in nature-based adaptation yields approximately \$4 in avoided losses (IUCN, 2025). When lot-level EDS are removed at the time of development, costs are deferred — not eliminated — and fall on municipalities and future homeowners through expensive retrofits. Ontario municipalities already face a \$52-billion infrastructure deficit (AMO), much of it in stormwater and climate-vulnerable assets.
2. **Reduce public health and safety.** The BC Coroner's Death Review Panel, following the 2021 heat dome, concluded that extreme heat is now a mass-casualty natural hazard and that long-term risk mitigation requires expanding urban tree canopy, increasing permeable surfaces, improving shading, and reducing urban heat island effects, precisely the features that Ontario's municipal EDS programs require. Prohibiting the use of mandatory requirements will result in fewer developers adopting these design features. This is not a design preference; it is a documented public health risk.
3. **Undermine efficient and effective planning.** Prohibiting EDS as a condition of land division approval (ERO 026-0309) extends the problem further upstream in the approvals process. Subdivision conditions are often the only opportunity to ensure that lot-level sustainability measures are built in before individual lots are sold and developed. Removing this tool fragments coordination, creates downstream retrofit costs, and reduces — not improves — planning efficiency across the project lifecycle.



4. **Reduce Ontario's stature as a leader in green standards and economic competitiveness.** Ontario's green building and green infrastructure sectors generate \$33 billion in GDP and support over 217,000 jobs province-wide (CAGBC, 2026). The recent federal-provincial investment in projects like the Waterfront East LRT, co-led by landscape architects and widely recognized for its integrated green public realm, demonstrates that high-quality, climate-resilient design and infrastructure delivery are complementary, not competing goals.

Recommendations

The OALA respectfully recommends that the Government of Ontario:

1. **Retain references to "sustainable design" in site plan control legislation.** Sustainable design is the professional and regulatory foundation upon which municipalities, planners, and design professionals coordinate environmental, social, and economic performance in the built environment. Removing this language also creates misalignment with federal funding programs that require demonstrated commitment to sustainability and climate resilience as conditions of eligibility.
2. **Retain municipal authority to apply Enhanced Development Standards at the lot level as municipalities deem appropriate,** whether through mandatory requirements or incentive-based approaches, and work collaboratively with professional associations, municipalities, and industry to address inter-jurisdictional inconsistencies.
3. Establish **a strong provincial performance standard** that sets a clear and consistent baseline all municipalities must meet, while permitting municipalities with established programs to exceed that baseline. This delivers industry certainty without eliminating the public health and fiscal safeguards that mandatory EDS currently provide.
4. Withdraw the proposed regulation under ERO 026-0309, which would extend EDS prohibitions to land division approvals, and instead engage with the planning and design community to develop streamlined, **standardized conditions that reflect best practices** for subdivision-level sustainability requirements.
5. **Include the OALA as a formal stakeholder in ongoing site plan control reform consultations (ERO 026-0310).** Landscape architects bear primary professional responsibility for the site-level elements covered by site plan control and lot-level EDS, yet were not identified as a consulting party in the Province's technical briefing materials. We respectfully request that this be corrected as the reform process moves forward.



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The OALA is committed to working constructively with the Province to build more homes faster without compromising the health, safety, and long-term quality of Ontario's communities. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in a technical working group on EDS and site plan reform, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the Ministry on these important issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Yours truly,

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Hirota', is positioned above the typed name.

Aaron Hirota, OALA, CSLA

OALA President

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About the OALA

With more than 2,000 members, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects (OALA) is a self-regulating professional association that has proudly served Ontario since 1968. As the provincial regulator of the landscape architect title, the OALA exists to serve the public interest by ensuring the competence, accountability, and ethical conduct of its members.

The Association sets professional standards for licensure, promotes the value of the profession to government and the public, and provides resources and continuing education to its members.