A Case for Green Infrastructure Investment in Ontario

Green Infrastructure ONTARIO COALITION

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is defined in the Ontario Provincial Policy Statement as the "natural and human made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes. Green infrastructure can include components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, street trees, urban forests, natural channels, permeable surfaces, and green roofs."

Green Infrastructure (GI) is essential to building healthy and resilient communities, and is a key element of a low-carbon future. It can help governments make prudent infrastructure investments in the context of the uncertainty and volatility of future climate conditions, as GI provides multiple benefits and is adaptable to a variety of conditions and scales.
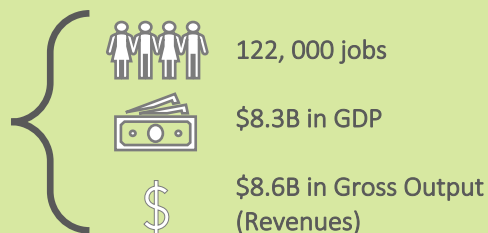
Key benefits include:

- short- and long-term cost savings,
- climate change adaptation and mitigation,
- stormwater management (particularly flood mitigation and water quality improvements),
- urban heat reduction,
- energy efficiency,
- enhanced biodiversity, and
- numerous public health benefits.

The new "Economic Impact Assessment of the Green Infrastructure Sector in Ontario" (commissioned by the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition (GIO) with funding from Greenbelt Foundation and additional support from Landscape Ontario) highlights **the importance of GI to Ontario's economy**.

Benefits of Green Infrastructure:

CLIMATE CHANGE   PUBLIC HEALTH   STORMWATER

ECOSYSTEM HEALTH   ECONOMICS   COMMUNITY

Green Infrastructure by the Numbers (2018)*

122, 000 jobs

$8.3B in GDP

$8.6B in Gross Output (Revenues)

* Jobs and GDP include indirect and induced impacts
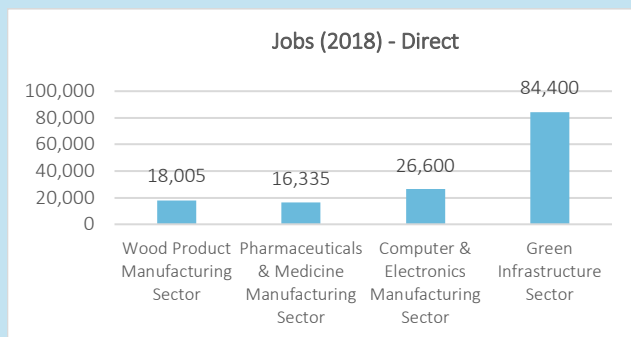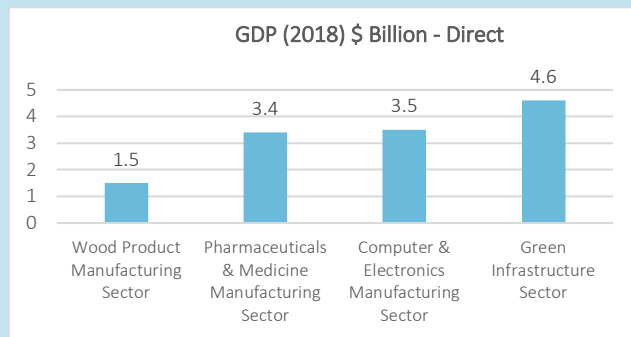
Key Findings

Local Supply Chain

The green infrastructure sector is embedded into Ontario's supply chains of local producers and suppliers of products and services, from green infrastructure materials (e.g. soil, trees, plants, garden and landscape materials), to construction contractors and maintenance service providers. The sector not only sources from local suppliers, but also supports a range of local industries indirectly, such as the outdoor recreation and tourism sectors. Investment in green infrastructure stays in the province!

Jobs

The chart (right, top) shows the GI sector's economic contribution and that of several comparable sectors; the chart (right, bottom) shows the direct jobs in each sector. As you can see, GI creates significantly more jobs—in fact, GI creates 28% more jobs than all three sectors combined.

What's more, these are **good jobs**, including design and planning, engineering, maintenance, consultants, contractors and suppliers, among others. These jobs include labourers, skilled trades, and professional services—there are many entry points and training opportunities for people to join the sector. There are also re-training opportunities for people who were trained in traditional practices to learn to incorporate GI. **Support for training and capacity building has the potential to significantly grow the sector and its economic impact.**

GDP (2018) $ Billion - Direct

Sector	GDP
Wood Product Manufacturing Sector	1.5
Pharmaceuticals & Medicine Manufacturing Sector	3.4
Computer & Electronics Manufacturing Sector	3.5
Green Infrastructure Sector	4.6

Jobs (2018) - Direct

Sector	Jobs
Wood Product Manufacturing Sector	18,005
Pharmaceuticals & Medicine Manufacturing Sector	16,335
Computer & Electronics Manufacturing Sector	26,600
Green Infrastructure Sector	84,400

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Return on Investment

The need for cost effective, science-driven solutions to pressing economic and environmental concerns is also driving the growth of this sector. Many recent reports* have noted the **high return on investment** in GI infrastructure projects that address climate resilience and disaster risk, particularly to flooding, which is now the most expensive and pervasive natural disaster nationally in the past decade. Another, 2019 Environment and Climate Change Canada report found that GI solutions provide significant additional benefits and more often at much **lower cost than the traditional alternatives**.**

Growth Forecasts

The case for investment in GI is clear—the GI sector can help us rebuild a stable, diverse, and importantly, a prosperous economy in the post-COVID 19 landscape.

The report also looked at the growth potential of the sector over the next 10 years. Even under current business-as-usual (BAU) growth trends, Ontario's GI sector is projected to grow by **22%** by 2030. With **increased investment** and **supportive policy**, that number jumps to **73%**.

Investment of as little as 15% of infrastructure spending dedicated to GI would help realize this growth, combined with supportive policy at the federal and provincial level that encourages GI implementation.

Green Infrastructure Sub-sectors:

The green infrastructure sector is made up of 7 economic sub-sectors:

1. Landscape Horticulture and Open Spaces
2. Green Roofs and Walls
3. Green Stormwater Infrastructure Systems
4. Urban Forests
5. Parks
6. Natural Heritage
7. Cross-Sectoral Support Services*

* The first 6 sub-sectors are supported by several cross-sectoral government and non-governmental organizations that are essential to Ontario's GI value chain.

Green Infrastructure and the Economy: Growing Together!

Investment in green infrastructure presents a transformative economic sector opportunity for Ontario; however, in order to fully realize its potential, our sector needs a reliable source of long-term funding to be able to plan and execute projects routinely. As these findings demonstrate, GI is win-win-win: it creates good, local jobs, supports climate and flood resilience, and provides a variety of benefits that make Ontarians happier and healthier.

You can help realize this future:

- **Short-term:** support for green infrastructure projects (including mapping and readiness-assessments for projects that are not yet shovel-ready)
- **Medium-term:** dedicate 15% of infrastructure funding to green infrastructure projects
- **Medium-term:** support creation of a support hub to overcome barriers to increased green infrastructure implementation
- **Long-term:** create a dedicated fund to support green infrastructure
- **Ongoing:** support policies that prioritize green infrastructure

* https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/savi-pellys-lake-stephenfield-canada-en.pdf & http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Resources/IBC-Natural-Infrastructure-Report-2018.pdf
** https://www.horizonadvisors.org/natural-infrastructure-benefits

About the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition

The Green Infrastructure Ontario (GIO) Coalition is an alliance of organizations that share a common vision for a healthy, green Ontario where the economic, social, environmental and health benefits of green infrastructure are fully realized. Founded in 2009, and guided by a steering committee, we work to promote awareness and understanding of green infrastructure, and to support policy and activities that increase implementation of green infrastructure across Ontario.

Conservation Ontario | Forests Ontario | Greenbelt Foundation **|** Green Roofs for Healthy Cities **|** Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association | LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) **|** Ontario Association of Landscape Architects **|** Ontario Parks Association **|** Toronto and Region Conservation Authority