



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

NCC Forest Strategy

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT
MAY 31 TO JUNE 14, 2019

Canada

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I. Project description

A. Background

In keeping with commitments made in its [Plan for Canada's Capital, 2017–2067](#), and [Sustainable Development Strategy, 2018–2023](#), the National Capital Commission (NCC) is developing a forest strategy which will guide the management of trees and forests on NCC lands over the coming decades. As part of this initiative, we are inviting members of the public to share their vision and priorities for natural and urban forests in the National Capital Region.

B. Objectives

The NCC's forest strategy will include the following components:

- a vision and objectives for the next 30 years
- a five-year action plan
- a list of prioritized potential planting sites, and
- canopy cover and planting targets

The strategy will address the management of trees and forests in urban areas, as well as in natural areas like the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park.

Regional partnerships are key to protecting trees and forests across the National Capital Region. The NCC will work with the Ville de Gatineau and City of Ottawa to identify shared goals and more effectively coordinate action.

II. Public consultation process

A. Overview

The consultation process for this project is multi-phased. It will include two rounds of online public consultations. The first round, which focused on visioning, objectives and concrete actions, was held in May and June 2019. The second, which will invite members of the public to read and comment on a draft of the strategy, will take place in the spring of 2020.

Objectives

The objectives of the consultation were as follows:

1. To provide members of the public with an early opportunity to shape the NCC's Forest Strategy.
2. To better understand the public's priorities and preferences with regard to forest management on a 30-year horizon, and seek ideas for potential actions in the next five years.

a. Date and time

May 31 to June 14, 2019

b. Format

Online survey

B. Consultation procedure and tools

a. Online public survey

The online survey was divided into three sections. The first invited respondents to articulate their vision for the trees and forests on NCC lands over the next 30 years. In the second, respondents were provided with 100 points and asked to distribute these according to the forest management objectives that they would most want to see accomplished. A follow-up question invited respondents to propose objectives that they felt were missing from the list. In the final section of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate what concrete actions they thought the NCC could take to achieve the objectives outlined in the previous section.

C. Invitation and promotion

An email invitation was sent using Public Affairs distribution lists, which include the following stakeholders:

- Interest groups, user groups and environmental groups
- Residents' associations
- Individuals
- Sustainable Development Strategy newsletter mailing list

Messages were also posted on the NCC's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), and in *Le Droit* and the *Ottawa Citizen* soliciting the participation of all interested members of the public.

D. Participants

a. Survey respondents

A total of 241 people provided responses to the full online survey.

III. Stakeholder and public consultation highlights

The feedback provided by respondents was overwhelmingly positive, constructive and consistent. Though details regarding implementation varied, five forest management initiatives received broad endorsement across all three sections of the questionnaire:

- Increasing the number, diversity and connectedness of trees in the National Capital Region.
- Ensuring that forests are healthy and resilient.
- Making tree-covered spaces more accessible and recreation-friendly.
- Strengthening the protection granted to trees and forests.
- Launching community engagement and educational efforts that aim to involve local organizations and citizens in forest management initiatives.

In the comments made by respondents, there was widespread recognition and appreciation of the many benefits humans derive from trees and forests: cleaner air, wildlife habitat, sun and noise protection, improved physical and psychological well-being, and so on. Many of the initiatives discussed as part of the consultation were framed as a means of enhancing and expanding these benefits.

On the whole, however, respondents tended to prioritize initiatives that have a direct effect on the health of trees and forest ecosystems (e.g. biodiversity, forest cover, connectivity) over those that operate through human engagement with the forest (e.g. education and interpretation, equitable access, minimizing health risks, and so on).

IV. Analysis of results and main comments received

A. Online public survey

Vision for forests in the National Capital Region

When asked to share their vision for NCC trees and forests over the next 30 years, respondents put forward a broad array of ideas and suggestions. The most frequently mentioned of these are summarized below:

- Expanding the total area occupied by trees and forests in the National Capital Region, and increasing the canopy cover.
- Fostering greater biodiversity in our forests, and ensuring a sustainable balance between older and younger trees.
- Managing trees and forests so that they remain healthy and beautiful.
- Allowing forests to grow and evolve naturally with minimal human intervention.
- Making forests accessible to the public on all fronts: public transit to get there, pathways within to explore them, and affordable recreational opportunities under and among the trees.
- Preference was given, when planting new trees, to native species and to species that are resilient to climate change.
- Supporting the growth of more mature forests.
- Greater regulatory protection for forests, and maintenance to combat pollution and safety issues.
- Greater protection and care for wildlife habitats.
- Reforestation in areas where the stock of trees has dwindled.
- More conservation forests with little or no recreational access.
- Greater tree density in the National Capital Region's parks and forests.

- More emphasis on, and resources dedicated to, fostering connectivity between forests.
- Planting more food-bearing trees.

Below are some examples of comments received.

Topic	Sample comment
Area, density and connectivity	<p>We need to retain what we have now, and plant more trees to provide those that have been lost, particularly within urban areas, i.e. the Greenbelt and national interest lands due to diseases such as emerald ash borer.</p> <p>More is always better when it comes to trees.</p> <p>Connected via eco-corridors which are essential for maintaining forest health. Wildlife travelling through eco-corridors spread seeds and genetic materials that cross-fertilize the connected areas.</p> <p>Thick forests with mature trees.</p> <p>A lot better than they do now. I believe Ottawa’s canopy is only about 26% and should be up around 40 to 50% for maximum benefit.</p> <p>I would like to see >50% of all NCC lands with full canopy native trees.</p>
Forest composition	<p>Dense forest with a large amount of biodiversity and a resurgence of local species.</p> <p>Trees of various species, the large majority of them native species, and including fruit trees (with information panels to inform passersby about harvesting the fruit when ripe).</p> <p>A diverse canopy of many different species, with as many trees planted as possible at varying ages.</p> <p>Diverse, plentiful, with staggered plantings continually to ensure generational renewal.</p> <p>The forest needs to be larger and more biodiverse in 30 years.</p>
Public use	<p>Access and recreation should be encouraged and yet controlled to ensure a healthy forest.</p> <p>Lush, with paths to allow others to see the beauty in some areas, while others left for wildlife to make their homes.</p> <p>I think there should be forests that are easily accessible by anyone from anywhere in the city. I also think more trees and greenery should be planted everywhere throughout the city. Concrete jungles aren’t healthy.</p> <p>Natural, but with usable spaces so the NCC [land] will truly be enjoyable by everyone. Hoping for more long-distance bike loops in the forest, walking paths, educational programs.</p>

Protection

Protection, protection, protection. Create marked trails, plant trees and have cleanup days.

Protected from garbage, such as papers, plastics and from potential disasters such as forest fires, oil spills and dumping of garbage.

I would like mature trees along the Rideau Canal and in Ballantyne Park and all parks within 1 km of the Rideau Canal, Rideau River and Ottawa River to be given protection from development.

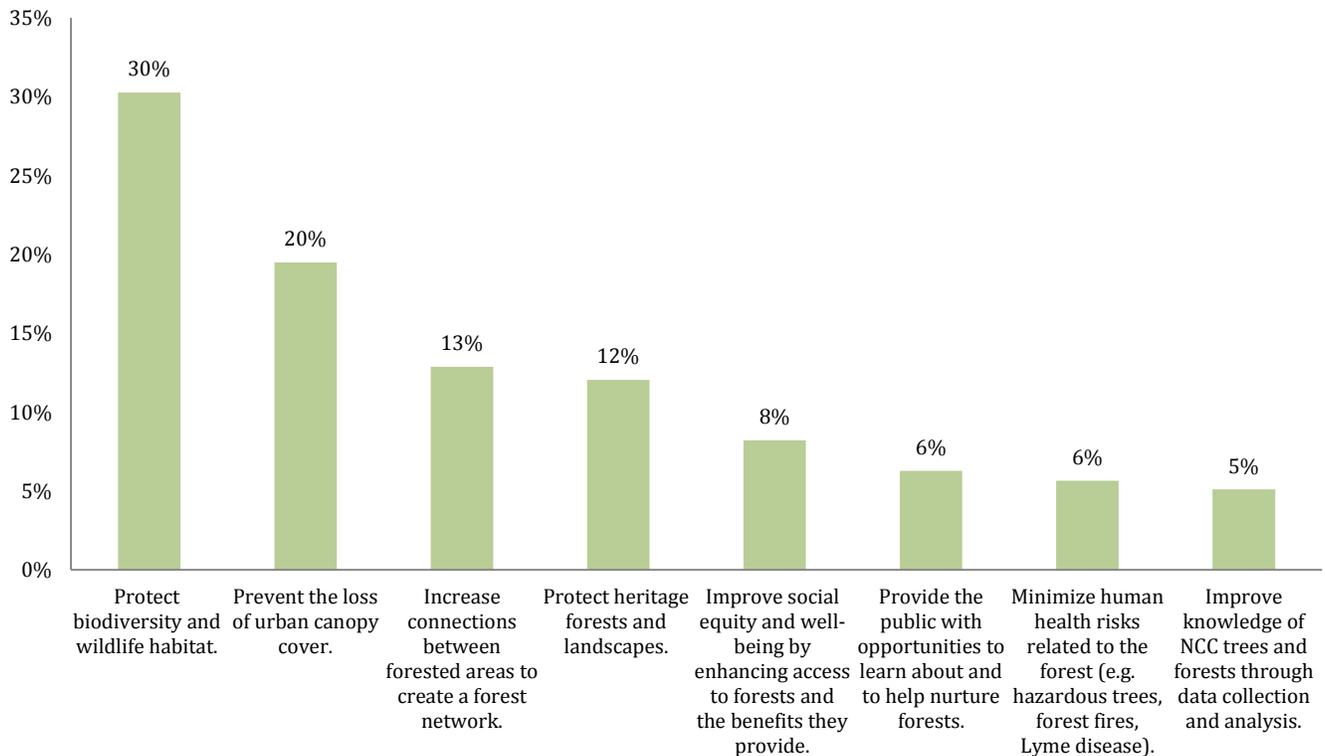
Protect existing forests and enhance their growth, and provide protection for wildlife.

Prioritization exercise

As part of the prioritization exercise, respondents were provided with a “budget” of 100 points that they could freely allocate to eight, pre-selected forest management objectives (*see Figure 1*).

Figure 1.

Point allocation for forest management objectives



The objectives that attracted the highest share of points all directly related to the health of forests, while objectives with a more social or human-centred orientation received markedly fewer points. Initiatives geared toward biodiversity, canopy cover and connectivity alone received 63 percent of all allocated points.

Nearly half of all respondents put forward additional objectives that they felt should be considered by the NCC. Of these, the most frequently mentioned were the following:

- Avoiding any urban development that would compromise or remove forested areas.
- Greater cooperation with local organizations and engagement with the public on issues related to forest management.
- More educational initiatives geared toward helping the public better appreciate the ecological and health benefits of trees and forests.
- Create more public spaces in nature and improve access to forests via cycling and hiking trails.
- Diligent reforestation of NCC properties where existing trees are dying or few in number.
- Greater regulatory protection for forested areas from development and political interference.
- Increasing the rate at which trees are planted and the area they cover.
- Increase the biodiversity of our forests, with a focus on native tree species and those resilient to climate change.

Below are some examples of comments received.

Topic	Sample comment
Threats and protection	<p>Protection of natural areas by preventing development is extremely important to the health of residents, well-being, ecosystems, biodiversity action on climate change.</p> <p>Reduce urban sprawl drastically. Stop greenlighting massive housing projects that leave little to no greenspace.</p> <p>Maintain or increase the amount of NCC land by creating stronger restrictions on land development and land sales.</p> <p>Protect the Greenbelt / Gatineau Park from any further development!</p>
Engagement and education	<p>Partnerships with educational institutions, e.g. forest schools. Pairing schools with specific trails, green spaces to encourage students to take ownership / have respect for our forests.</p> <p>Educate people on using Leave No Trace tactics while enjoying these places. Having more people use natural spaces is great, as long as they respect those areas to keep them in good condition for future generations to enjoy.</p> <p>Increased public engagement on the role of forests, tree cover and biodiversity</p>

Better partnerships with established community groups who are already working on these issues; e.g., Adopt a Park groups (city); community associations, and so on. “Train the trainer” model keeps cost down and spreads education / best practices further.

Public use

Some forests should be opened up to recreational activities. XC skiing, cycling, trail running, obstacle course training (Cross fit), disc golf, dog walking, and so on. Not all forests, but some forests, people should have access to.

I hope the forests on NCC land will become more accessible through hiking trails and bike paths. The residents of Ottawa and tourists should be able to enjoy nature in person.

More picnic areas and maybe playgrounds near forested areas.

Mixed use. We have large fields as sports parks with no trees. Large forests with no localized areas for recreation.

Planting

Replanting trees for fuller, more vibrant environments, with the benefit of increased air quality.

Mass reforestation of NCC properties: divided medians, parkways, clearings. All our tall majestic trees have died in the past decade, replaced by invasive shrubs.

Increase the number and diversity of trees at every possible opportunity.

Increase tree planting. Focus on agricultural lands and marginal lands to establish windbreaks and new forests.

Concrete actions

In the third and final section of the survey, respondents were invited to propose concrete actions that would contribute to the accomplishment of the NCC’s forest management objectives. The actions most frequently put forward by respondents included the following:

- Plant more trees, particularly in urban areas. Replace dead or diseased trees, and give priority to native species.
- Forge partnerships with organizations that share similar objectives, and support citizen and community involvement in forest management.
- Launch educational initiatives to help the public better understand the importance of forests and how to enjoy their benefits responsibly.
- Bolster the laws, policies and infrastructure that protect NCC forests, particularly to prevent urban development from encroaching on these lands. Designate more forests as spaces for conservation.
- Collect and analyze data to better understand factors that bear upon the well-being of NCC forests, and adopt an evidence-based approach to forest management.
- Make forests more accessible to the public by improving trails and facilities.

- Create and maintain wildlife corridors and connections between forested areas. Protect and support wildlife habitats in NCC forests.
- Acquire and reforest more land.
- Offer members of the public better public transit options to improve equitable access to NCC forests.

Below are some examples of comments received.

Topic	Sample comment
Planting and land acquisition	<p>Aggressive tree planting with associated watering and maintenance to ensure healthy establishment through the first five years. Need to redouble efforts to retain the trees we have in our capital and make tree protection mandatory in all federal projects in the National Capital Region.</p> <p>Plant more trees, especially fruit and nut trees.</p> <p>Plant more trees in urban areas, and protect existing forests on NCC [lands].</p> <p>Buy more land, restore to natural state.</p> <p>Purchase land and reforest site, encourage land owners to preserve and plant trees.</p>
Engagement and education	<p>Advertising with educational material (about trees, plants, invasive/natural species, birds, animals, endangered species, climate effects and pollution effects, indicator species), along with invites to informational tours of paths in forests, wetlands and so on.</p> <p>More information for users to inform them about responsible use... Keep people informed about ways to contribute to keeping the park at its best.</p> <p>Involve citizens, educate them and partner with First Nations.</p> <p>Work with public health officials and local medical leaders to organize a response to the increasing local risks of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses that would include a public outreach campaign to inform people of risk mitigation strategies when visiting natural spaces, education for front-line medical practitioners on how to recognize and respond to tick-borne illnesses, and raising the profile of the impacts of these illnesses at the federal and provincial levels to secure additional funding for action to combat it.</p>
Protection	<p>Mandate protection, require safety for older trees on new-build sites, more urban neighbourhoods with tree protection in conjunction with City forest/tree management.</p> <p>Extend protection for heritage forests; review planning bylaws and advocate for tree/canopy protection when assessing proposals; keep planting; improve public understanding of need (self-interest works) for healthy canopy and forests.</p>

	<p>Protect the land.</p> <p>Pay more attention to developments that destroy green spaces.</p>
Studies	<p>Data collection is essential to plan how to go about protecting some areas, while also making sure that there is accessible forest for the public.</p> <p>Do more research, don't rush into things until they have been completely thought out.</p> <p>Research, in collaboration with academia, and act according to the findings.</p> <p>Develop good maps of the areas (unless these already exist), and carefully select which types of forest management or development will be done in each area. Ensure that most of the forest land is protected from major human developments. Become well aware of the types of developments on land beside NCC lands. Do a general survey of tree types, and add a certain portion of diversity to different areas.</p>
Public use	<p>Improve access to woodlands, forests and their use, for citizens to enjoy them and to be able to experience the forest, which will increase the motivation to protect and preserve it, and to take ownership for taking care of it.</p> <p>Create more accessible forest areas for the public.</p> <p>Improve the biking trails on the Ontario side of NCC [lands] (Quebec side seems paved in many places, and so on. Gatineau Park is beautiful. Also allow for improving roads in and through parks, such as adding a lane. Add more to the Greenbelt by buying more land in the west end. Allow for lunch or dinner escapes with federally run welcome areas, restaurants and observation areas to appreciate the beauty and majesty of the natural forests.</p> <p>Improve access to NCC forest by providing free parking and shuttle services to encourage use by economically disadvantaged persons.</p>
Wildlife	<p>Restoring breeding grounds for turtles so they don't have to lay eggs on the side of the roads.</p> <p>Consider ecosystem fragmentation with projects that cross the green space. Over- or underpasses for wildlife around roads and light rail tracks.</p> <p>Plant more trees, to give wildlife more homes/safe places. Increase awareness of how important it is to conserve our parks/nature.</p>

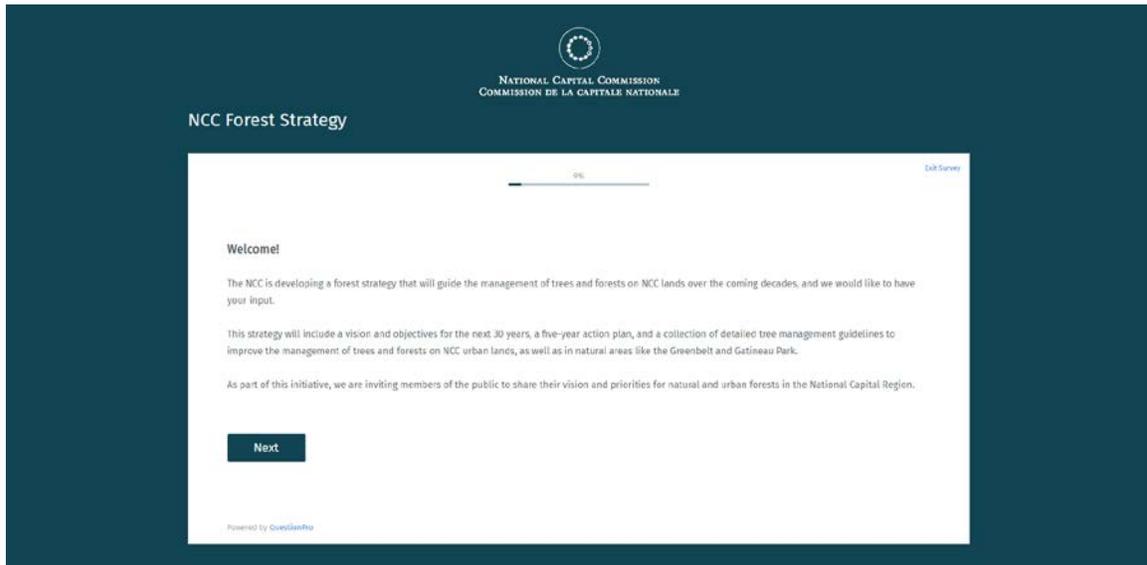
V. Integration of results

The comments received during the online consultation are well aligned with the forest strategy content developed thus far. The project team has reviewed all comments and ideas, and some have already been incorporated into the Forest Strategy framework. Other comments and ideas, which need more analysis, will be incorporated into the draft of the Forest Strategy.

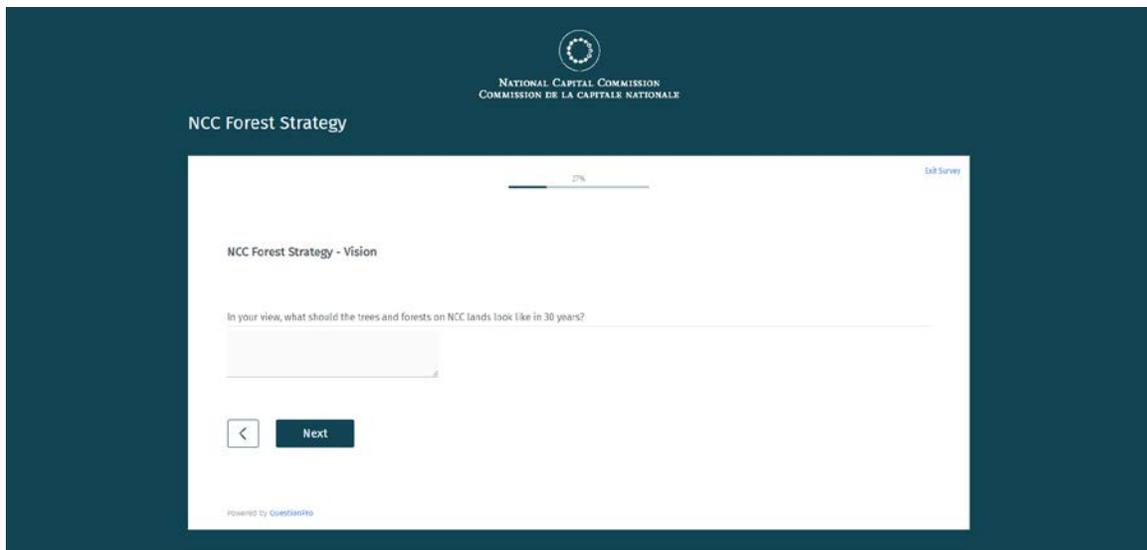
VI. Next steps

The Forest Strategy framework will be presented to the Advisory Committee on Planning, Design and Realty and the Board of Directors in October and November 2019, respectively. Regional forestry stakeholders will be invited to an in-person consultation in October 2019, and the public will have another opportunity to provide comments on a draft strategy in spring 2020. The Advisory Committee on Planning, Design and Realty and the Board of Directors will review the draft Forest Strategy in March and April 2020, respectively. The final version of the strategy will be submitted for approval by the NCC's Board of Directors in September 2020.

VII. Appendix 1: Online survey



The screenshot shows the first page of an online survey titled "NCC Forest Strategy". At the top, there is a logo for the National Capital Commission (NCC) and its name in both English and French: "NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION" and "COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE". Below the logo, the title "NCC Forest Strategy" is displayed. A progress bar at the top center shows "0%". The main content area is titled "Welcome!" and contains the following text: "The NCC is developing a forest strategy that will guide the management of trees and forests on NCC lands over the coming decades, and we would like to have your input." followed by "This strategy will include a vision and objectives for the next 30 years, a five-year action plan, and a collection of detailed tree management guidelines to improve the management of trees and forests on NCC urban lands, as well as in natural areas like the Greenbelt and Gatineau Park." and "As part of this initiative, we are inviting members of the public to share their vision and priorities for natural and urban forests in the National Capital Region." At the bottom of the content area, there is a dark blue button labeled "Next". In the bottom left corner, it says "Powered by Qualtrics".



The screenshot shows the second page of the online survey. It features the same NCC logo and title as the previous page. The progress bar now shows "20%". The section is titled "NCC Forest Strategy - Vision". The question is "In your view, what should the trees and forests on NCC lands look like in 30 years?". Below the question is a large, empty text input field. At the bottom left, there is a back arrow button and a dark blue "Next" button. The "Powered by Qualtrics" text is also present in the bottom left corner.

NCC Forest Strategy

Questions marked with a * are required

40%

Exit Survey

NCC Forest Strategy - Priorities

* We would like to know what your priorities are with regard to forest management.

You have 100 points to allot. Please distribute them according to the forest management objectives that you would most like to see accomplished.

Protect biodiversity and wildlife habitat.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prevent the loss of urban canopy cover.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase connections between forested areas to create a forest network.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minimize human health risks related to the forest (eg. hazardous trees, forest fires, Lyme disease).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve social equity and well-being by enhancing access to forests and the benefits they provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protect heritage forests and landscapes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve knowledge of NCC trees and forests through data collection and analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide the public with opportunities to learn about and to help nurture forests.	<input type="checkbox"/>



Next

Powered by [QuestionPro](#)

NCC Forest Strategy

83%

Exit Survey

NCC Forest Strategy - Objectives

Are there any other objectives that you think the NCC should consider?

- Yes
- No

Please specify:



Next

Powered by [QuestionPro](#)

NCC Forest Strategy

33% Edit Survey

NCC Forest Strategy - Concrete Actions

In your view, what concrete actions could the NCC take in order to achieve some of the objectives listed in the previous question within the next five years?

< **Next**

Powered by [QuestionPro](#)

NCC Forest Strategy

100% Edit Survey

NCC Forest Strategy - Updates

Do you or an organization you're involved with want to participate in future consultations for the forest strategy? If so, please sign up for our public engagement newsletter on the following page by selecting the "Public engagement" option: <http://ncc-ccn.gc.ca/sign-up-for-our-newsletter>

< **Finish**

Powered by [QuestionPro](#)