

February 5th, 2020

Joe Maure
Forest Sector Strategy
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
70 Foster Drive, Suite 610
Sault Ste Marie, ON
P6A 6V5

Dear Mr. Maure,

Please accept this as Forests Ontario's formal response to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's 'A Blueprint for Success: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy (Draft)' (ERO number 019-0880).

We would like to commend the province for undertaking this review. Our forests are one of our most important resources and provide us with a wide range of ecological, social, and economic values. The sustainable management of our forests, and the assurance that all of the values we derive from them are provided over the long-term, requires ongoing effort and dialogue.

Forests Ontario is pleased that the draft strategy recognizes the need to increase forestry education opportunities for our youth and the public's understanding of the important contributions our forests make to our overall well-being. As Ontarians, we should be proud of the fact that we have some of the best managed forests in the world. Forests Ontario understands that these points were raised during many of the consultation sessions held over the course of the past year and we commend the province for ensuring these points are captured in the strategy.

We are also pleased that the strategy recognizes the hard work and commitment that our organization, and our supporters, have put into our education programs and associated resources, including Forestry Connects and Forestry in the Classroom. We are similarly encouraged by the recognition of the collaborative efforts of various like-minded organizations under the It Takes a Forest public awareness initiative.

As noted in the draft strategy, these programs and initiatives are paramount in promoting a better understanding of Ontario's forests, provincial forestry practices, and forest

stewardship among youth (our future stewards) and the broader public. Further, Forests Ontario's education and awareness efforts highlight Ontario's standing as a global leader in sustainable forest management.

Our programs and initiatives also play an instrumental role in attracting younger generations to the broader forest sector. As noted in the draft report, forestry (like many industries) is suffering from labour shortages in a variety of key roles, from truck drivers, to logging and mill operators, to skilled trades people and supervisors. Directly engaging Ontario's youth through interactive educational programs and activities, such as those developed and maintained by Forests Ontario, has played – and will continue to play – a vital role in overcoming these growing labour challenges.

We look forward to discussing how we can enhance and expand these programs and initiatives in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of the provincial government and Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Keen", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Rob Keen, RPF
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