



Media Release

The Future of Species at Risk Policy is a Question of Credibility

Ontario Forestry Coalition Says Fact-Based Arguments Should Trump Emotional Rhetoric

September 13, 2017 – A coalition of municipal leaders, chambers of commerce, unions, and the forest sector are raising alarm bells that draft provincial species at risk policy will jeopardize jobs in northern and rural Ontario.

The Ontario Forestry Coalition has been repeatedly requesting that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) consult with municipalities, Indigenous communities, and industry leaders to address the impact that the proposed species at risk policy will have on the forest sector.

“Although NOMA initially graded the government as completely off track with regard to the Endangered Species Act, we sincerely appreciate Minister McGarry’s announcement that the posting of finalized species at risk policy will be suspended. We are now growing more and more concerned that even with the suspension of the policy, plans are in the works that will negatively impact the forest industry and those who rely on a robust sector to provide for their families,” said Wendy Landry, NOMA President and Mayor of Shuniah.

Landry voiced concerns raised by a constituent in the region, “I have a forestry contractor in my own community who has recently made investments in excess of \$6 million to buy equipment, expand his workforce, and invest in infrastructure. It has become clear to him that the proposed species at risk policy will have a devastating impact on fibre availability in our region, the life blood of his business, his employees, and the families these important jobs support.”

Recently, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Kathryn McGarry, announced that her ministry needs a better understanding of the impacts of climate change, the cumulative effects of all activity on a broad, dynamic landscape, and a much better appreciation for the socio-economic implications, before finalizing species at risk policy.

Mayor Dave Canfield of Kenora stated, “We welcomed the news from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, however we remain concerned that campaign-driven and emotionally-charged arguments being presented by environmental activists will continue to drive the process. MNRF is choosing to ignore credible, fact-based arguments being presented by people who have been working on the land for years, and MNRF’s own research scientists. For example, MNRF has spent \$11 million in caribou research that suggests the range of woodland caribou herds has barely changed since the 1950s.”

President of FONOM and Mayor of Kapuskasing, Al Spacek, made similar comments, “Decisions on policy needs to be informed by the people who are most impacted. Arguments presented by those with special interests and no skin in the game cannot be viewed as credible. This is our own backyard and we deserve to have a say in the policy that governs it.”

President and CEO of OFIA, Jamie Lim, concluded, “If we truly want to strengthen our forest sector and the middle class, government policy needs to support current operations and provide consistent, reliable and affordable access to wood fibre. The future of 57,000 people directly employed by the sector, and their families, depend on getting this policy right.”

About the OFC

The Ontario Forestry Coalition is a grassroots organization focused on ensuring that government policy supports the continued resurgence of Ontario’s renewable forest sector, the maintenance of full-time forestry jobs, the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the three pillars of sustainability.

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