



November 7, 2013

Mr. David O'Toole  
Deputy Minister  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)

Dear Mr. O'Toole,

Members of the Canadian Institute of Forestry – Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) in several of our Ontario Sections have expressed concern with respect to your Ministry's transformation plan and the recent decision to remove forester positions in six of your Ministry's southern districts. While we understand the fiscal realities, and that difficult decisions must be made, the more centralized organization that is emerging is potentially resulting in a loss of public accessibility to vital knowledge and understanding of forests and good forestry practices. MNR districts have traditionally been the backbone of your organization, with interdisciplinary forest practitioners and professionals developing comprehensive expertise over many years. Their knowledge is respected and sought after by the public. In addition, the increasing importance of urban and peri-urban forestry in these southern districts, which contain the majority of Ontario's population, further necessitates the guidance and expertise of well-trained and knowledgeable forest professionals.

The CIF/IFC echoes the concerns expressed in a letter sent to you on October 31, 2013 by the Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OPFA). We strongly encourage the continued provision of professional forest stewardship capacity in southern Ontario; and offer to engage in collaborative leadership with you and the OPFA to ensure that there is adequate capacity in this regard. We need to somehow build on the institutional capabilities that have developed over the past century, perhaps for example through enhanced engagement and use of conservation authorities, the Ontario Forestry Association, and municipal urban forestry departments. More than ever we need to promote best forest management practices on all public and private land. As well there is a need to maintain a high level of education and monitoring to effectively address invasive species, maintaining species at risk habitat, mitigating climate change, promoting the use of wood as a renewable resource, and always to emphasize the ecological goods and services that are inherent in and a vital part of all of our forests.

The people of Ontario need to be confident that their natural resources are well-managed for current and future generations. We are hopeful that MNR leadership will ensure that local forestry knowledge and experience continues to be readily accessible in southern Ontario. We would appreciate an opportunity to meet in the near future to discuss ideas, strategies and solutions to make certain that this vital expertise is available in the urban and peri-urban forests of southern Ontario, and to ensure that private land owners continue to have full, efficient and timely access to such. Please contact us at your earliest convenience so that representatives of the OPFA and the CIF/IFC can meet with you for constructive discussions.

Yours Truly,

C. Tattersall (Tat) Smith  
President

John F. Pineau  
CEO

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*Voice of Forest Practitioners / La voix des professionnels de la forêt*

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