

Greg Bales
6130 4th Line
Tottenham,
ON L0G 1W0

November 4, 2017

The Honourable Kathleen O. Wynne, MPP Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1
kwynne.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street West Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3
kmcgarry.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Re: Ontario Needs Government Leadership to Ensure Tree Seed for Resilient Forests

Dear Premier and Minister:

Many of us are deeply concerned about the August 2017 announcement by the OMNRF that the Ontario Tree Seed Plant (OTSP) is scheduled for closure in September 2018.

I have been involved in many reforestation and tree improvement programs and projects working with the OMNRF from my time in the forestry section in the 1980's and 90's. Also my involvement with species-at-risk, forest species recovery projects with the OMNRF's Stewardship Program has convinced me of the need for continued "in-house" expertise that the OTSP provides, to ensure that there will be sufficient supplies of high quality, locally adapted tree seed of native species.

The OMNR's State of Ontario's Natural Resources - Forest Indicators states:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/genetic-conservation-native-trees> "Conserving adapted populations of native tree species maintains these species' capacity to adapt to changing conditions. It also conserves genes that could be important for resistance to damaging agents.
The Ontario Tree Seed Plant has 1,073 seed collections for gene conservation, containing about 2.7 million black spruce, jack pine and white pine seeds. While seed collections for gene conservation are limited, hundreds of millions of seeds are in storage for commercial use representing native tree species from all over the province; many of these are potentially available for gene conservation each year depending on other needs".

While we have very specific, immediate concerns about the repercussions of this decision, it firstly shows a disturbing lack of a vision for Ontario's forests under climate change. What is the government's strategy to? Where is government leadership in facilitating the implementation of this critical adaptive strategy, to ensure our forests will be able to provide the environmental services our society's welfare depends on? Those services highlighted in Ontario's Action Plan on Climate Change: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/climate-change-action-plan#section-11>

I along with many others are deeply concerned that the Tree Seed Plant closure decision:

- was made without client and public consultation;
- was made without sufficient, expert analysis of its effects; and where in fact several OMNRF management staff conclusions have been shown to be mistaken;
- was made without respect for the unique expertise of Seed Plant staff, including their extensive networking that has ensured high quality seed and seed source chain of custody;
- **was made without taking into account that MNRF transformation and cutbacks since 2010 resulted in poor cost management that constrained the Plant's significant mandate;**
- takes Ontario in a direction opposite to jurisdictions who recognise tree seed processing and banking as an essential social service to help adapt to climate change;
- does not recognise that the private sector alone cannot undertake this significant and necessary challenge to ensure the resilience of Ontario's forests;
- seriously constrains private sector growers' ability to follow government seed policy as per the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and the 50 Million Tree Program's objectives;
- is being enacted too quickly to develop short and long-term options that will provide seed for reforestation practitioners, and ensure the quality of the seed currently in storage;
- is proposing, instead to put resources into a yet undefined *native tree seed genetic archive* for internal OMNRF science needs, which will not address any of these challenges, and is actually already provided for by Natural Resources Canada's National Tree Seed Centre.

Premier and Minister, there is an opportunity for the OMNRF to engage in a proper consultation process that will result in solutions to this urgent challenge; solutions that must involve Government support and oversight, but most importantly leadership, on behalf of all of Ontario. We live in a forest – but there's no forest without seed.

Respectfully,

Greg Bales

Email: gregnbales@gmail.com

CC: Bill Thornton, Deputy Minister, OMNRF bill.thornton@ontario.ca
Chris Ballard, Minister, OMOECC minister.moecc@ontario.ca
Jeff Leal, Minister, OMAFRA minister.omafra@ontario.ca
Dr. Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario commissioner@eco.on.ca
Donnie McPhee, Manager, National Tree Seed Centre, NRCAN donnie.mcphee@canada.ca
Forest Gene Conservation Association of Ontario fgcaontario@gmail.com
Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park, Susan Antler susan@utopia.ca