

Friends of the
UTOPIA
Gristmill & Park

October 12, 2017

Premier Kathleen Wynne
Government of Ontario

Minister Kathryn McGarry
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

RE: Proposed Closure of MNR's Ontario Tree Seed Facility in Angus, Essa Township, Ontario

Dear Premier Wynne and Minister McGarry,

We are writing regards to the recently announced permanent closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility in Angus, Essa Township, Ontario. A facility that, for the last 94 years, has well served the needs of the forests and the people of Ontario.

A well-attended public meeting was held last evening at the Utopia Hall in Essa Township (see attachment). Those in attendance included Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry representatives, AWARE Essa, Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park, FORESTS ONTARIO, Elected Officials (Essa Township, Springwater Township, Legislature of Ontario), Corporate Citizens (eg. Somerville Nursery) and many individuals. All of us were shocked by the lack of public consultation before the announcement was made a few weeks ago AND by the announced closure date of September 2018.

Premier and Minister We are requesting that the normal consultative process, for which you and the Ontario Government are known for, be immediately put in place to determine the future of this storied facility. A facility which has played a significant role in our Province where, thanks to the existence of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility, deserts, created by human activity, were brought back into the green forested areas that we have today (a story told by many including John Bacher in his book on the legacy of the then Chief Forester of Ontario, Edmund Zavitz: TWO BILLION TREES and COUNTING (2011)).

We respectfully request that:

1. Any actions on the closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility be immediately put on hold pending the outcome of a consultative process;
2. A Stakeholders Committee be constituted as soon as possible with membership that would include: FORESTS ONTARIO, AWARE Essa, Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park, MNR representatives, experts in the field and Corporate representatives;

3. This Stakeholder Committee report no later than 4 months from the date of it being constituted by yourselves. Such a report to include alternate modes of delivery, including a non-profit entity, with the objective of possibly relieving ongoing operating expenses presently incurred by the Government of Ontario with regards to this facility; and
4. That an emergency meeting be convened through your good offices of our representatives and yourselves within the next two weeks.

Premier and Minister, we strongly believe that there is time to do a proper consultation process as we are proposing while achieving your (artificially set) deadlines.

As this is an urgent matter, we would like to thank you in advance for your expeditious reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Antler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Antler, chair
Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park

cc: Patrick Brown, Leader of the Official Opposition
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Jim Wilson, MPP
Mayor Terry Dowdall & Council, Essa Township
Councillor Katy Austin, Springwater Township
FORESTS ONTARIO
ESSA AWARE
Interested Media