



November 28, 2017

The Honourable Kathleen O. Wynne, MPP, Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A6
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The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, MPP, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street West Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3
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Re: Ontario Policy & Decision Review Concerning the Angus Seed Plant Facility

Dear Premier and Minister:

The Dufferin Simcoe Land Stewardship Network (DLSLN) is a not for profit volunteer organization dedicated to promoting and supporting the responsible care and use of land and natural resources in Dufferin and Simcoe Counties. The recent announcement of the planned closure of the OMNRF Tree Seed Plant (OTSP) facility in Angus is of deep concern to our group.

Some members of the DLSLN attended the October 11, 2017 public forum that provided the OMNRF with an opportunity to share their reasoning behind the pending closure and to take away feedback. It was an arduous meeting with the closure rationale based on the facility operating in the red. However, unaddressed were the short and long term ramifications of such a closure, and the fate of decades of work under the OMNRF's long standing 'seed zone tracking' policy.

The DLSLN respectfully requests more information on the following issues related to policy and facility planning:

1. What is OMNRF's strategy to ensure the 'seed zone tracking' process is maintained after OTSP closure and any subsequent transfer of seed processing functions to private sector or NGO interests? The question is posed given the inherent risks associated with a failure to maintain the "seed zone" approach, which could include:
 - a. reduced restoration and afforestation success rates associated with the use of inappropriate seed sources;

- b. additional restoration and afforestation costs associated with mitigating poor results due to inappropriate seed and nursery stock; and
 - c. the broader concern related to the contamination risks of local source tree genetics (i.e. what are the genetic impacts likely to be if seed sources from a broad range of forest zones and climates are now readily used in Ontario projects?)
2. What are the costs associated with transferring the seed processing functions out of the public sector? Our concern is that the increased costs will ultimately be borne by groups interested in restoration, reducing their overall output capacity. Also, additional costs will likely be passed from industry onto landowners resulting in fewer being able to afford plant material to make ecological improvements that collectively benefit us all.
3. In the event that these public service lands are sold:
 - a. What are the OMNRF's plans for the archived seed currently stored at the facility?
 - b. Is there a strategy to salvage the current genetic archive function of the OTSP?
 - c. What will become of the seed processing and storage equipment and other infrastructure located at the OTSP?
 - d. What are OMNRF's plans regarding maintenance of the partnership and community support roles currently undertaken by the OTSP?

Southern Ontario, with its mix of urban, rural, and agricultural landscapes has unique challenges in maintaining healthy native forests, forest corridors, and urban canopies. The DSLSN hopes the OMNRF will find new ways that the Angus facility can become viable as a southern operations hub to maintain seed integrity, diversity, and availability for ongoing native tree plantings.

The DSLSN looks forward to receiving your answers to the above questions.

Sincerely,



Caroline Mach
President

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

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