



January 22, 2018

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

The Honourable Nathalie Des Rosier, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street West Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3  
minister.mnrf@ontario.ca

**By Email and Mail**

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

Dear Premier and Minister,

The Ontario Urban Forest Council (OUFC) is a not-for-profit membership-based organization working toward diverse, sustainable, and resilient urban forest ecosystems since 1963. Our membership is varied and includes arborists, foresters, landscape architects, growers, planners, municipalities, restoration specialists, environmentalists, conservation authorities, green advocates, and many other individuals from the public interested in and concerned about trees.

**The OUFC is concerned to hear the August 2017 announcement by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) that the Ontario Tree Seed Facility is scheduled for closure in September 2018.**

The Ontario Tree Seed Facility has played a critical role in the sustainability of forests, both urban and rural, in Ontario since 1923. Its closure will result in a long-term reduction in Ontario's capacity to support the planting of and management of public and private forests. Ontario urban forests are already under immense pressures that are hindering our communities' abilities to meet goals surrounding biodiversity, invasive species, climate change, and sustainable growth. The closure of this facility will likely exacerbate these issues that the Province has a responsibility to help address:

**1. Biodiversity**

The Ontario Biodiversity Council has listed the following objectives and outcomes in their Biodiversity Strategy:

- Protect Ontario's genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity;
- Invest resources and funds strategically;
- Adopt a proactive approach to maintain common species and common ecosystems; and
- Identify and act upon critical priorities, partnerships, and actions to conserve biodiversity.



January 22, 2018

Having a publicly-owned and publicly-accountable facility that ensures there is a source of quality local seed is both responsible and a strategic investment that is essential to protecting the genetic and species diversity of Ontario's forests. The Ontario Tree Seed Facility is exactly this. This facility focuses on collecting, maintaining and distributing quality seed for tree and shrub species, which provide the foundation for a diverse forest community. The diversity (or lack thereof) within the tree community will further affect the diversity of the animal, avian, insect, fungal, and other plants in the ecosystem.

### **Invasive Species**

According to the OMNRF, "A key objective of the Invasive Species Act (2015) and the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan (2012) is to prevent new invasive species from arriving and establishing in Ontario, since the most efficient and cost-effective way to manage invasive species is to prevent their introduction in the first place."<sup>i</sup>

Closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility, and the subsequent reduction in seed supply, will lead to an increase in purchasing seed and stock from suppliers from outside of Ontario. With this increased movement of imported seed stock, there is a much greater risk of introducing new invasive species and pathogens that could damage or even destroy our existing tree populations. Ensuring there is a local facility with the ability to provide quality native tree seed is a cost-effective way to reduce the risk of invasive species and pathogen introductions to Ontario.

## **2. Climate Change**

Section 4.4 of the Climate Change Action Plan states that "Ontario will continue to support tree-planting programs, including its commitment to plant 50 million trees across the province by 2025. The number of trees to be planted within the boundaries of urban municipalities will be doubled from one million to two million..." As referenced above, closure of the Plant will result in a reduced capacity to plant quality trees based on **seeds appropriate to the 36 seed zones** in Ontario. This will impact Ontario's ability to meet its climate change mitigation and adaptation goals.



January 22, 2018

### 3. Population Growth

The Provincial Policy Statement lays a vision for Ontario that states “The long-term prosperity and social well-being of Ontario depends upon planning for strong, sustainable and resilient communities for people of all ages, a clean and healthy environment, and a strong and competitive economy.” There is extensive research that demonstrates urban forests are key infrastructure for sustainable, healthy, and resilient communities.

Development in the urban and suburban areas of the Province is occurring at a rapid pace. Current policy often allows developers to remove vast amounts of trees – even in areas with municipal tree bylaws in place. The burden of replacing these this public infrastructure is placed on the municipality, many of which have a policy to plant more native trees. With the closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility, there will be a decline in the supply of seeds for native trees. Nurseries/Propagators which use this seed source may reduce or eliminate production of seedlings used as lining out stock or in seedling planting programs. This is going to put increased financial pressure and potential decline in the supply of trees for municipalities and other tree-planting organizations that are trying to plant trees from known, quality sources. In turn, fewer trees (or lower quality trees) will be planted, leading our communities to become less healthy, resilient, and sustainable.

To ensure that Ontario can meet its goals relating to biodiversity, invasive species, climate change, and sustainable growth, any action to close the Ontario Tree Seed Facility should be put on hold until the Province has provided sufficient evidence that the costs of operating this facility far outweigh the environmental enhancing value it provides to Ontario.

**The OMNRF and the Government of Ontario must engage in a public/stakeholder consultation to seek a solution to this urgent challenge for the sake of a diverse, sustainable, and resilient Ontario.**

**We look forward your positive response to this request.**

Respectfully,

**The Ontario Urban Forest Council, Executive Director and Board of Directors**

Peter Wynnyczuk, Jose Rubio Lazo, Barbara Yaroski, Madelyn Webb, Jacqueline Hamilton, Justin Gaudon



January 22, 2018

CC: Bill Mauro, Minister, MMA [minister.mma@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mma@ontario.ca)  
Bill Thornton, Deputy Minister, OMNRF [bill.thornton@ontario.ca](mailto:bill.thornton@ontario.ca)  
Chris Ballard, Minister, OMOECC [minister.moecc@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.moecc@ontario.ca)  
Jeff Leal, Minister, OMAFRA [minister.omafra@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.omafra@ontario.ca)  
Dr. Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario [commissioner@eco.on.ca](mailto:commissioner@eco.on.ca)  
Donnie McPhee, Manager, National Tree Seed Centre, NRCAN  
Dale Simpson, Scientist Emeritus, National Tree Seed Centre, NRCAN  
[dale.simpson@canada.ca](mailto:dale.simpson@canada.ca)  
Steve Hounsell, Chair, Ontario Biodiversity Council [steve.hounsell@bell.net](mailto:steve.hounsell@bell.net)  
Rob Keen, Forests Ontario, [rkeen@forestsontario.ca](mailto:rkeen@forestsontario.ca)  
Forest Gene Conservation Association of Ontario [fgcaontario@gmail.com](mailto:fgcaontario@gmail.com)  
Northeast Seed Management Association [nesmarf@ntl.sympatico.ca](mailto:nesmarf@ntl.sympatico.ca)  
Superior Woods Tree Improvement Association [pcharret@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:pcharret@lakeheadu.ca)  
Ontario Professional Foresters Association [opfa@opfa.ca](mailto:opfa@opfa.ca)  
Conservation Ontario [info@conservationontario.ca](mailto:info@conservationontario.ca)  
Landscape Ontario [tonydigiovanni@landscapeontario.com](mailto:tonydigiovanni@landscapeontario.com)  
Patrick Brown, Leader of the Official Opposition, [patrick.brownco@pc.ola.org](mailto:patrick.brownco@pc.ola.org)  
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party [ahorwath-qp@ndp.on.ca](mailto:ahorwath-qp@ndp.on.ca)  
Jim Wilson, MPP [Jim.wilson@pc.ola.org](mailto:Jim.wilson@pc.ola.org)  
Mayor Terry Dowdall & Council, [tdowdall@essatownship.on.ca](mailto:tdowdall@essatownship.on.ca)  
Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park, Susan Antler [susan@utopia.ca](mailto:susan@utopia.ca)

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=22462>