The CHAMBER.

October 28, 2024

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

The Honourable Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Whitney Block, 7th Floor
95 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1W3

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Ministry of Finance
900 King Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5X 1E3

Subject: Supporting Ontario's Forest Industry in the 2025 Ontario Budget

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Smith, and Minister Bethlenfalvy,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and representative of our 650 businesses in the Timmins area, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce are writing to express our strong support for the Ontario Forest Industries Association's recommendations in the 2025 Ontario Budget to support Ontario's forest industry.

Ontario's forest industry is a cornerstone of our provincial economy, providing employment for 137,000 individuals and contributing significantly to the prosperity and growth of our communities. Despite substantial investments exceeding $3.8 billion since 2018, the sector continues to face significant challenges, including global competition, rising input costs, and trade barriers.

To ensure the long-term viability of Ontario's forest industry, we encourage the government to take the following actions:

- **Market Ontario as a global leader in the bioeconomy**: By investing in research and development, providing incentives for innovation, and streamlining regulations, Ontario can attract significant investment in the bioeconomy, creating new jobs and sustainable industries.

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- **Support the restart of idled pulp mills**: The recent closures of pulp mills have had a detrimental impact on communities and sawmill operations. Government support, such as financial incentives and streamlined approvals, can help restart these facilities and secure the future of the sector.
- **Extend and expand the *Forest Biomass Program***: This program has been successful in promoting the use of forest biomass for energy generation. To ensure its continued success, the program should be extended beyond 2027 and expanded to include a wider range of biomass feedstocks.
- **Increase funding for forest access roads**: Adequate funding for forest access roads is essential for sustainable forest management and recreational activities. The government should increase the annual funding for the *Public Forest Access Roads Funding Program* to $75 million to address inflationary pressures and invest in infrastructure upgrades.
- **Advocate for a fair settlement in the softwood lumber dispute**: Ontario should work with the federal government to negotiate a settlement that protects the interests of Ontario's lumber producers and provides financial support to mitigate the impact of U.S. tariffs.
- **Promote the use of forest biomass for energy production**: By incentivizing the use of forest biomass for electricity, heat, and fuel production, Ontario can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and contribute to its decarbonization goals.

The Timmins Chamber of Commerce believes that by implementing these recommendations, the Ontario government can create a thriving forest industry that benefits both the environment and the economy. We urge you to consider these proposals and work with industry stakeholders to develop policies that support the long-term sustainability of Ontario's forest sector. Thank you for your attention and consideration. We welcome any opportunity to discuss this matter further at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Faught Jr.,
President
Timmins Chamber

Keitha Robson
Chief Administrative Officer
Timmins Chamber

Cc:
Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. George Pirie, Minister of Mines – MPP Timmins
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

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Hon. Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources
Hon. Kevin Holland, Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products
Hon. Andrea Khanjin, Environment, Minister of Conservation and Parks
Hon. Minister Todd McCarthy, Acting Minister of Environment, Minister of Conservation and Parks
Hon. Minister Steven Lecce, Minister of Energy and Electrification
Hon. Sam Oosterhoff, Associate Minister of Energy Intensive Industries
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance

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