
REQUEST FOR SUPPORT: BIOMASS INITIATIVES IN RENFREW COUNTY

Overview

The forest sector is essential to the communities of Renfrew County. There are more than 1,500 people in Renfrew County directly employed by the forest sector, a significant number for this area with a total population of just over 100,000 and about 43,000 households.

The businesses that receive wood from forests in Renfrew County are family-owned, some having been in operation for 5+ generations. They are critical to the survival of our communities and have demonstrated that sustainable forest management is a way of life here – and hope it will continue to be for many more generations to come.

We appreciate the Province's attention to the state of the forest industry through the Forest Sector Strategy, Forest Biomass Program, Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program, and funding that has been granted to proponents in our County through these programs. With only three pulp mills left in Ontario, the nearest destinations for our local mills are in Quebec, 250 and 400km away, with limited intakes.

Without a solution to the pulpwood crisis, some harvest areas with high pulpwood volumes are being bypassed, meaning sawmills will receive less sawable materials. The increased complexity and less area available for harvest will further exasperate the already challenged logging workforce, attracting less entrants and making it even less viable to invest in new equipment. There will also be negative impacts on the forest, as areas with a high component of overmature and degrading poplar will continue to decline and succumb to natural mortality and increased fire risk. A recent study on biomass availability showed that our region has over 480,000m³ of surplus low-end material.

There is no viable forest sector without a market for low-end material. Local industry and the Ontario government point to biomass as being the solution to the excess of pulpwood volume.

Proposed Solutions in Renfrew County

Recently, three local mills were the recipients of funding to explore possibilities for local biomass facilities. Accelerated action and assistance is needed to get shovels in the ground on biomass projects – urgently – before the sector collapses.

- **Golden Lake Power LP** (a 50/50 partnership between Ben Hokum & Son Ltd of Golden Lake, and CEM Engineering of St. Catharines), is shovel-ready to build a 13.5 MWe biomass cogeneration plant in North Algoma Wilberforce, generating 12.5MWe to the grid and 30-40 local jobs.

- **Roseburg Forest Products Pembroke MDF**, which is prepared to invest \$135 million for a new heat plant and cogeneration system in Laurentian Valley, securing 200 existing jobs and creating 8 new positions.
- **Harvest Bioindustrial Group**, which is at the engineering phase of building a bio-refinery on the Lavern Heideman & Sons sawmill site in Eganville. This would use 70,000 tons of roundwood pulp/year.

Request for Support

We ask the Province to:

- Champion, continue to partner with and provide financial support to biomass projects ready to supply solutions in Renfrew County, like those described above.
- Work with other Ministries to insure permitting and hydro infrastructure are not process or investment prohibitive in biomass project start-ups.
- Provide access to funding or cost-sharing for grid connection.

Conclusion

With your support, we can ensure that the forestry sector in Renfrew County continues to be a viable and important part of our community, and that sustainable forest management can continue to improve the health, fire resilience and carbon sequestration capability of the Ottawa Valley Forest.