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# CHAMPIONING SUPPORT FOR THE FOREST SECTOR IN RENFREW COUNTY

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## 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.

## Biomass

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 480,000m<sup>3</sup> 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.

Recently, three local mills were the recipients of funding to explore possibilities for local biomass facilities. The Town of Petawawa is also seeking funding to complete a feasibility study to develop a biomass CHP plant for local and district heating. Accelerated action and assistance is needed to get shovels in the ground on biomass projects – urgently – before the sector collapses.

## Projects Proposed

- **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.
- **Town of Petawawa/TorchLight Bioresources**, which is proposing a biomass CHP plant using wood chips from low-grade timber and sawmill residues to provide local heat and district heating for the community.

## Glyphosate

Pine-processing mills represent a major portion of forestry-related employment in Renfrew County. Recently, public opposition to the use of **glyphosate** in forests has increased exponentially in our area, fueled by misinformation. Without the use of herbicides as a silvicultural tool, maintaining or increasing the level of pine on the landscape to historical levels would become not only cost-prohibitive, but less successful. This is of concern to long-standing, multi-generational companies who rely on pine for their future wood supply, and also to the health, long-term carbon sequestration and diversity of the Ottawa Valley's forests.

This year, a map of the entire Renfrew County was included in the MNR notification of upcoming aerial spray program. This led to many members of the public believing that the whole County would be sprayed, including private property, many of which were directed at our staff.

## Black Ash

The County of Renfrew has submitted concerns at every stage of Environmental Registry of Ontario consultation on the listing and protection of **Black Ash**. The decision posted on January 26, 2024 states that a decision has not yet been made the proposal for a conditional exemption for forestry operations on privately-owned land. This exemption is necessary for sustainable forest management to continue on private lands within the mapped protection area.

Although Black Ash is not a targeted species for harvest, the species is very present and scattered throughout the landscape that leaving a reserve around each specimen over 8cm in diameter would create detrimental access and logistical issues in nearly every forestry operation.

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There are not enough forestry professionals in Ontario nor Provincial staff to handle the volume of assessments that would be required should permitting be necessary. Although Emerald Ash Borer is present in our area, many Black Ash deeper in woodlands are still unaffected and would require assessment and permitting for forestry to continue on County-owned and private land unless the conditional exemption is passed.

This is prohibitive in small-scale forestry and is discouraging the management of private and County-owned forests.

## 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.
- Not ban the use of herbicide spraying on forests in Ontario.
- Change the way aerial spray programs are announced to the public with accurate maps including the affected area in hectares or percentage of or percentage of the managed Crown forest land base.
- Designate staff and resources to developing public education and outreach materials so that facts and frequently asked questions about glyphosate use can be easily accessed by those with questions, including municipal councils and staff.
- Work with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation & Parks (MECP) to develop an exemption to the protection of black ash during sustainable forest management activities on private land.

## Why Your Support Matters

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.