



ONTARIO FOREST INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

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Growing a stronger, greener Ontario

MEDIA RELEASE

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Environmental Commissioner's Office in over their head Modern forest management proves difficult for ECO to understand

In order to set the record straight, the Ontario Forest Industries Association (OFIA) is responding to several inflammatory and incorrect statements made by the Environmental Commissioner's Office (ECO) in a media release dated September 22, 2010.

"Many of the ECO statements are a gross oversimplification or are outright just misleading", says Jamie Lim, President and CEO of the OFIA, adding "you really have to wonder where they are sourcing their information".

Of particular concern is the ECO attempt to erroneously paint natural resource sectors, including forestry, as 'status quo' or 'business-as-usual' sectors that have remain unchanged for 150 years.

"There is no such thing as status quo with regards to forest management in Ontario" says Scott Jackson, Manager of Forest Policy at the OFIA. "We are one of the most, if not the most heavily regulated sectors in the province and forest policy is continuously being updated. In fact, due to our rigorous and adaptive regulatory framework we are one of only a handful of sectors to have a class approval under the provincial Environmental Assessment Act."

In 1994 the forest sector adopted a system that manages for caribou in order to restore and enhance habitat on the landbase. The adaptive move, which sets aside land for up to 70 years as core caribou habitat and ensures there is always sufficient habitat, resulted in the loss of up to 30% of the available fibre in some areas, yet was adopted based on good information and science. And there is evidence it is working.

However, the ECO chooses to ignore the evidence and make erroneous statements such as "caribou have disappeared - and never returned - wherever we have built roads and logged in the last 150 years."

Had the ECO done their homework, they would realize that as early as 1996 the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) observed caribou re-using previously harvested forests near Lucy Lake Ontario and documented their findings in a publicly available study titled *Caribou Winter Habitat in the New Forests: Lessons from Lucy Lake*. More recently, the Ministry of Natural Resources own data shows caribou using areas actively managed for forestry around South Allely Lake, an area located further south than the range established for caribou in the 1950s. MNR survey results from the Trout Lake Forest, which has been managed for forestry for decades, show that caribou populations are stable.

“The statements made by the ECO make it clear that there is no understanding of current forest management practices, forest history, or forest policy as it relates to Ontario” adds Scott Jackson, stating that when he first read the ECO media release “I thought I was reading a special interest fundraising brochure”.

When asked what could possibly motivate such inaccurate statements from a government appointee’s office with approximately 20 staff, Lim responded “It appears that the ECO is more concerned with trying to appear relevant than the need to be factual”.

“We’re concerned that despite the fact that caribou habitat management requirements are already in place, the ECO has chosen to focus on this threatened ecotype of a sub-species of the most abundant ungulate in Canada, when there are more than 80 endangered, higher risk species, present in Ontario, many located in highly developed areas in southern Ontario, and many without any habitat protection measures”, says Jackson.

“We expect a little more from the ECO”, says Lim, concluding that “the ECO should be more than a cheerleader for southern Ontario special interest groups.”

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