



Media Release

## New Provincial Policies Creating Precarious Employment Impacting Northern and Rural Ontario Families

### Coalition Raising Concerns on Lack of Consultation During Policy Development

**July 13, 2017** – In response to new policies that will significantly impact northern and rural Ontario, a coalition of indigenous and municipal leaders, chambers of commerce, unions and the forest sector have come together to voice their concerns over a lack of meaningful consultation by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

Members of this coalition have been working proactively with government over the last 18 months to develop new rules, also known as “prescriptions”. Despite best efforts and solutions offered by practitioners, the Government intends to rush unbalanced and potentially damaging policy through the approval process without consulting with indigenous communities or municipalities.

“The socio-economic impacts of the proposed rules have the potential to be catastrophic for northern and rural Ontario, jeopardizing the livelihoods of 57,000 hardworking men and women in this province,” said Jamie Lim, President and CEO of OFIA.

“The recent resurgence of the forest sector has created hundreds of new jobs for my members,” said Guy Bourgoin, President of United Steelworkers, “These policy proposals threaten to derail this recovery.”

Expressing similar concerns, Chief Edward Wawia of Red Rock Indian Band said, “Despite commitments made by the MNRF, traditional ecological knowledge has been ignored and we have not been consulted.”

Dave Canfield, Mayor of Kenora commented, “We are concerned with how these new policies may threaten forest sustainability and that they will have unintended consequences. The current approach by MNRF does not consider the effects of climate change and has the potential to limit the Government’s ability to store more carbon in our forests through sustainable forest management.”

Ian Dunn, OFIA’s Director of Forest Policy stated, “As practitioners, we care about all species that live in our forests, but believe the current approach may actually do more harm in the long-term.” He continued,

“Forestry has the ability to maintain and create habitat through space and time. To not be considering climate change during the development of forestry policies is incredibly short-sighted.”

Municipal leaders within the coalition suggested that the government needs to slow-down the development of policies that incorporate species at risk prescriptions. FONOM President, Mayor Al Spacek of Kapuskasing, stated, “Municipalities and indigenous communities have been treated as an afterthought during this process. To make any decisions before we have been provided all the relevant information does not meet our expectation of consultation.”

Lim concluded, “If these proposed new rules are implemented, mills will close, jobs will be lost, and forestry dependent communities will be decimated. We are prepared to work with Premier Wynne to ensure that she delivers on her promise to leave no worker, region or family behind.”

### **About the OFC**

The Ontario Forestry Coalition is a grassroots organization focused on ensuring government policy that supports the continued resurgence of Ontario’s renewable forest sector, the maintenance of full-time forestry jobs, the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the three pillars of sustainability.

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