

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario  
Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A4  
kwynne.mpp@liberal.ola.org

January 5, 2018

The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Suite 6630, 6th Floor, Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley Street West Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3  
kmcgarry.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

**Re: Ontario Needs Government Leadership to Ensure Tree Seeds for Resilient Forests**

Dear Premier and Minister,

The Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition (GIO) is an alliance of organizations from many different sectors across the province that have a common vision of a healthy, green Ontario where the economic, social, environmental and health benefits of green infrastructure are fully realized.

In order to fully realize the benefits of green infrastructure in Ontario, it is important to have a reliable supply of native tree stock and seed. For this reason, GIO was concerned to hear the August 2017 announcement by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) that the Ontario Tree Seed Plant (the Plant) is scheduled for closure in September 2018.

The Plant has played a critical role in forest (including urban forest) management and restoration for almost a century, and its closure could lead to a long-term reduction in Ontario's capacity to support the management of public and private green infrastructure. Such an abrupt closure is likely to result in negative consequences to Ontario's forests which are already facing challenges associated with climate change and invasive species.

The Plant supports many functions that relate to the OMNR's mandate. In Premier Wynne's September 2016 Mandate Letter to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the following priorities that relate to the Plant are listed:

**1) Supporting Forestry: Working with municipalities and other partners to promote urban forestry, continue to work towards the commitment of planting 50 million trees province wide.**

Closure of the Plant will have serious implications to urban forest managers and the 50 million tree program. Reducing the supply of quality seeds for growers in the province may result in an increase in imports from outside of Ontario, at a cost to municipalities and the 50 million tree program. This cost will either result in less planting, or an increase in lower quality and less genetically diverse stock which will ultimately be very costly to municipalities, conservation authorities and the public.

- 2) Strengthening Biodiversity: Supporting implementation of Biodiversity: It's In Our Nature, the Ontario Government Plan to Conserve Biodiversity 2012-2020. Continue to work with other ministers, the Ontario Biodiversity Council and partners to implement the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy to advance measures aimed at further strengthening and protecting Ontario's biodiversity.**

Seed source is essential to the success of tree planting and biodiversity initiatives. The Plant focuses on seeds from native species, which provide the foundation for a diverse forest community. Furthermore, the Plant ensures seed zone identification so that seeds may be returned to the area of origin for reforestation where it can thrive.

- 3) Minimizing the Impact of Invasive Species: Advocating and collaborating with other jurisdictions to address the threat of invasive species. Present Ontario's concerns at the bi-national and federal level.**

Reduced seed supply may lead to increased purchasing of seeds and stock from suppliers from outside the province. With this increased movement of stock, there is a greater risk of introducing new invasive species and pathogens to our existing tree populations.

- 4) Supporting the Climate Change Action Plan: Working with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to implement the Climate Change Action Plan and develop a natural resource climate adaptation strategy as part of the government's commitment to renew "Climate Ready."**

Section 4.4 of the Climate Change Action Plan states: "Ontario will continue to support tree-planting programs, including its commitment to plant 50 million trees across the province by 2025. The number of trees to be planted within the boundaries of urban municipalities will be doubled from one million to two million, with funding for irrigation where appropriate." As referenced previously, closure of the Plant will result in a reduced capacity to plant quality trees in Ontario.

To ensure that Ontario is able to meet its goals of climate change adaptation, invasive species management and biodiversity protection, any action to close the Plant should be put on hold until the province has provided sufficient evidence that the costs of operating this facility outweigh the value it provides to the province as a whole. Furthermore, if the decision is made to close the Plant, the province should create a transition plan to protect the vital genetic resource and the local industry, conservation authorities and municipalities that currently depend (directly and indirectly) on the Plant.

The OMNRF and the Government of Ontario should engage in a consultation process that will result in solutions to this urgent challenge; for the sake of green infrastructure and a healthy, resilient Ontario.

Respectfully,



Deborah Martin-Downs, Chair  
Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition

CC: The Honourable Liz Sandals, MPP, Guelph. [lsandals.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:lsandals.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org)  
Bill Thornton, Deputy Minister, OMNRF [bill.thornton@ontario.ca](mailto:bill.thornton@ontario.ca)  
Chris Ballard, Minister, OMOECC [minister.moecc@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.moecc@ontario.ca)  
Jeff Leal, Minister, OMAFRA [minister.omafra@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.omafra@ontario.ca)  
Dr. Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario [commissioner@eco.on.ca](mailto:commissioner@eco.on.ca)  
Donnie McPhee, Manager, National Tree Seed Centre, NRCAN  
Dale Simpson, Scientist Emeritus, National Tree Seed Centre, NRCAN [dale.simpson@canada.ca](mailto:dale.simpson@canada.ca)  
Steve Hounsell, Chair, Ontario Biodiversity Council [steve.hounsell@bell.net](mailto:steve.hounsell@bell.net)  
Rob Keen, Forests Ontario, [rkeen@forestsontario.ca](mailto:rkeen@forestsontario.ca)  
Forest Gene Conservation Association of Ontario [fgcaontario@gmail.com](mailto:fgcaontario@gmail.com)  
Northeast Seed Management Association [nesmarf@ntl.sympatico.ca](mailto:nesmarf@ntl.sympatico.ca)  
Superior Woods Tree Improvement Association [pcharret@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:pcharret@lakeheadu.ca)  
Ontario Professional Foresters Association [opfa@opfa.ca](mailto:opfa@opfa.ca)  
Conservation Ontario [info@conservationontario.ca](mailto:info@conservationontario.ca)  
Landscape Ontario [tonydigiovanni@landscapeontario.com](mailto:tonydigiovanni@landscapeontario.com)  
Patrick Brown, Leader of the Official Opposition, [patrick.brownco@pc.ola.org](mailto:patrick.brownco@pc.ola.org)  
Andrea Horwath, Leader of the New Democratic Party [ahorwath-gp@ndp.on.ca](mailto:ahorwath-gp@ndp.on.ca)  
Jim Wilson, MPP [Jim.wilson@pc.ola.org](mailto:Jim.wilson@pc.ola.org)  
Mayor Terry Dowdall & Council, [tdowdall@essatownship.on.ca](mailto:tdowdall@essatownship.on.ca)  
Friends of the Utopia Mill & Park, Susan Antler [susan@utopia.ca](mailto:susan@utopia.ca)