

Healthy Forests, Brighter Futures A Proposal to Revitalize the Ontario Forest Industries

submitted by the

Ontario Federation of Labour, United Steelworkers and CEP

1. HYDRO PRICING AND JOBS

The future of Northern Ontario jobs and communities is threatened by the high cost of power. The provincial government must implement changes to deal with these costs which have been identified as central to the job loss across the industry. The implementation of a regional authority to utilize the capacity to produce power at a competitive price and ensure supply is affordable is critical to any job building or retention strategy.

2. A REGIONALLY-BASED TIMBER ALLOCATION SYSTEM

Regional timber boards run by representatives of workers, communities, First Nations and governments would put people back into forest planning.

Crown timber in each region should be set aside to meet locally-set objectives, industrial diversification, value-added production and workforce training. Companies should not be permitted to harvest vast amounts of Crown timber without processing it and providing jobs and economic activity in the region.

3. LOCAL MANUFACTURING TIED TO TIMBER HARVESTING

Set targets for job creation, diversification, value-added, research and training, and write into them timber allocation system and timber-harvesting agreements.

Companies should enter into long-term agreements with the regional timber boards, communities and their employees. Honouring these agreements should be a condition for holding on to or expanding timber-harvesting rights.

4. RESTOCKING AND ENHANCED SILVER CULTURE

To get Crown timber, companies should agree to replant the timber they harvest and tend the stands they grow. In return, they should be guaranteed any additional volume they produce.

5. INDUSTRIAL DIVERSIFICATION

Governments need to systematically target job creation through collaborative measures with companies, workers and communities.

Taxation and regulations policy should be designed to encourage firms to develop new processes, find new markets and create new products.

Training facilities should be located in forest-based communities.

6. PROVINCIAL CHIEF FORESTER

Ontario should immediately appoint a Provincial Chief Forester whose primary job would be to audit forest resources and ensure that logged areas are adequately reforested. Regions where Mills have closed putting communities at risk should be the highest priority.

Audit results and any subsequent recommendations to lower or raise rates (allowance harvest) should be subject to public review and comment before the Chief Forester renders a final decision.

7. EFFECTIVE MILL CLOSURE REVIEW PROCESS

Companies should discuss alternatives to shutdowns with community leaders, workers and local governments, including and realistic offer for sale.

The appointment of a jobs commissioner with a mandate to explore all possible alternatives and ensure that all possible options are investigated is critical.

Even when no alternatives to closure can be found, companies must provide reasonable and fair transition measure. (We can beef this up with the NDP private members= bills.)

8. INDUSTRY SUPPORT FUND

A jointly sponsored provincial and federal government fund to support forest industry workers and communities should include both upside and downside training, pension bridging and early retirement support.

DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

WHEREAS

The forest products industry is the second largest contributor to Ontario's balance of trade recently directly employing 85,000 and many thousands more across the province in supply and service and contributes \$2.3 billion in taxes to all levels of government.

AND WHEREAS

The Ontario governments own Ministers Council on Forest Sector Competitiveness recognized the impending crisis in the industry.

AND WHEREAS

Mill closures and reductions in operations have devastated the sustainability of economies in communities across Northern and Eastern Ontario, throwing thousands of forestry workers out of work, threatening the employment of teachers, nurses, retail and civic workers and driving real estate prices into the ground.

AND WHEREAS

Any solution to this crisis requires the input and involvement of all stakeholders.

AND WHEREAS

Ontario government all party committees have served as a vehicle to solicit input and involve the public in finding solutions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That the Municipality of _____ calls on the Government of Ontario to strike an all party committee of the Ontario Legislature to immediately conduct hearings throughout the province and specifically in impacted communities.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the committee be mandated to provide all stakeholders with an opportunity to make presentations.