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**Forests Ontario Annual General Meeting
Feb. 3, 2022
Report of the President – Malcolm Cockwell**

Welcome everybody and thank you for joining us for this, the eighth Annual General Meeting of Forests Ontario. I am your President and I appreciate the opportunity to deliver this report to you, our valued members and stakeholders.

There have been many accomplishments and several significant changes over the last year. There are also some notable opportunities ahead of us. During these remarks, I would like to walk you through some of the highlights from the last twelve months.

First and foremost, you will notice that, unfortunately, I am not Steve Hounsell. After serving as the President of Forests Ontario since inception eight years ago, and serving before that as the President of Trees Ontario, Steve has decided to pass the reigns, and will not be continuing as a Director of Forests Ontario after today.

Speaking personally, it is an honour to be Steve's successor as President of this great organization. I fondly recall when I was first invited to join the Board of Directors of Forests Ontario way back in 2014 – that was the first time I met Steve, and I was immediately impressed with his integrity, dedication, and comprehensive knowledge. Every interaction since then has been consistent with that first impression.

Since then, it has been a personal pleasure to work alongside Steve, to learn from him, and to witness first-hand how great people can accomplish great things.

Speaking officially, we are all deeply grateful for Steve's contributions over the years. He has made immeasurable contributions to Forests Ontario and to the environment in general over his years of service to this organization. I will not even attempt to list his achievements with Forests Ontario, or Trees Ontario before that. His legacy – this great organization, its many great programs, and its many millions of trees in the ground – speaks for itself.

Steve, thank you for all that you have done.

Getting down to business, I am pleased to report that Forests Ontario has had another successful year. The last twelve months were not without their challenges – that we are meeting virtually is a testament to this fact.

However, our CEO, managers, and staff have been productive in their work towards achieving Forests Ontario's mission to **be the voice of our forests by supporting forest restoration, stewardship, awareness, and education.**

Select operational achievements over the course of 2021 include the following:

- We planted 2.80 million trees!
 - o This means that this was one of our best planting years, ever.
 - o It also means that Forests Ontario has planted a total of 38.70 million trees since its various tree planting programs were initiated in 2004.
- We proved that >80% of our planted trees are thriving on the landscape, per a study co-authored by our very own Chief Operating Officer.
- We secured ongoing support for our 50 Million Tree Program from the federal government, and made progress with the much-anticipated 2 Billion Tree Program.
- We continued advancing the Grassland Stewardship Initiative and established a dedicated coordinator position to oversee this worthwhile program.
- And we were recognized as a Restoration Implementer of the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, setting the stage for our work over the next ten years.

There were many other achievements over the course of 2021, and naturally these remarks reference just a small sample of the work undertaken this year.

I trust that you will join in me in applauding the hard work of our CEO, managers, and the staff of Forests Ontario for their efforts this past year.

In that theme, I would like to recognize and thank the Board of Directors of Forests Ontario. These individuals dedicate immense time and effort to the organization. I would like to recognize their service by naming them:

- Christine Leduc, our Vice-President
- Riet Verheggen, our Secretary
- Michael Klasner, our Treasurer
- Gail Beggs
- Kim Gavine
- Peter Johnson
- Sydney Oaks
- David Sisam
- Bob Hyland

- Bonny Skene, and
- me, Malcolm Cockwell, your President

There are two initiatives undertaken by the Board of Directors in 2021, which I would like to highlight for you during these remarks.

First, the Board of Directors launched the Friends of Forests Ontario, which is intended to be a select group of dedicated individuals who will gather and contribute support to the organization's operational efforts. This initiative will likely prove to be critical to our long-term success as an organization: we need to source funds and other forms of support from like-minded individuals and corporations in order to ensure that we are well-positioned to achieve our goals over the long term.

I will take this opportunity to do my job and make a pitch for the Friends of Forests Ontario. If you are, or if you know somebody who is, aligned with the mission and vision of Forests Ontario, and is prepared to offer resources towards it, the Friends of Forests Ontario would like to speak to you. So please do not be shy, and reach out.

Second, it is worth noting that, over the past year, the Board of Directors reviewed and finalized the new Strategic Plan that will guide Forests Ontario over the course of 2021 through 2024.

The goals of the new Strategic Plan are generally similar to the previous version:

- We will develop and support forest restoration and stewardship programs
- We will build awareness of the value of healthy forests
- We will develop and support educational programs, and
- We will strengthen organizational capacity and resources

By achieving these goals, we will achieve our vision: Ontario's forested landscapes sustain biodiversity, healthy people, and a healthy economy. We trust that everyone here today is aligned with these goals, this vision, and our mission. The Strategic Plan is available for all of you to review at your leisure.

Similar to my remarks about the operational achievements of Forests Ontario, these two initiatives are just a small sample of the work undertaken by the Board of Directors over the course of 2021. We are fortunate to have such worldly and committed Directors, and I trust that you will join me in thanking them for their service.

Looking ahead through 2022, Forests Ontario will be focused on doing the good work that it has been doing for nearly a decade – and for longer, if you count its predecessor organizations.

It will also focus on preparing for the massive treeplanting initiative entailed by the roll-out of the 2 Billion Tree Program, and it will focus on securing the resources to support that initiative.

Above all, Forests Ontario will continue working to achieve its mission to **be the voice of Ontario's forests by supporting forest restoration, stewardship, education, and awareness.**

In closing, I would like to thank all of you, our valued members and stakeholders. Forests Ontario is a great organization doing great work, and we are grateful for your support.

I would like to request a motion for acceptance of the 2022 President's report.

Motion: "To accept the 2022 President's Report."

Moved: _____

Seconded: