

**Annual General Meeting of Forests Ontario
Thursday, January 28, 2021
Virtual Zoom Meeting**

1. CALL TO ORDER

I, Steve Hounsell, President, call the Annual Meeting of Forests Ontario to order at 5:03 p.m. on January 28, 2021.

Present: Steve Hounsell, President and 37 Members (count of members)

2. ACCEPTANCE OF PROXIES

Motion: That 13 proxies be received." (count of proxies)

Moved: Donald McDonald

Seconded: Ian Buchanan

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of Forests Ontario dated February 14, 2020.

Minutes have been distributed to all members present.

RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the February 14, 2020 Annual General Meeting of Forests Ontario members be approved.

Moved: Malcolm Cockwell

Seconded: Peter Gagnon

Discussion or omissions:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

4. BUSINESS FROM MINUTES

Is there any business arising from the minutes of the 2020 meeting?

Record of business arising from 2020 minutes: none

5. REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome all and thank you for attending the seventh Annual General Meeting of “Forests Ontario”.

Another year has passed and it is time for a little reflection and time to look to the future.

In terms of reflection, I am pleased to say that we have had another successful year, but we have also had some serious challenges. It has been a metaphorical roller coaster ride with some real lows and some real highs. I said that at last year’s AGM and it remains true yet again for this past year.

The last few years have proven to be extremely challenging, initially with the closure of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant and then with the termination of the provincially funded 50 MTP under the Conservative government. We managed to find solutions to both issues, including receiving funding from the federal government to continue the 50 MTP under federal NRCan direction. Thankfully that great support continues.

This past year has seen a whole new set of challenges for Forests Ontario and indeed all sectors of society, due to a global pandemic - COVID-19. It has been a very significant test of organizational resilience, and adaptability and leadership, beyond anything any of us have experienced. It has necessitated new health and safety working protocols and new ways of working and for most staff that meant working from home, which they did with great success.

Indeed, this past spring’s tree plant almost did not happen. Efforts to declare tree planting as an essential service and efforts to ensure appropriate health and safety protocols under the threat of COVID-19 were critical pre-requisites for our spring plant. That included critically important collaborative efforts with Nurseries and our planting partners to ensure we could indeed deliver tree planting operations safely and successfully. We and our partners planted just shy of 2 million trees in key locations in midst of a global pandemic. And we did so without any health issues. Kudos are deserved to all involved in that effort.

Kudos are also deserved for our staff who have continued to find innovative ways to deliver our forest education and awareness efforts in a virtual world. Although we cannot meet face-to-face, we are still connected thanks to technology. As bad as this pandemic is, imagine how

much worse if would have been even a decade ago without the ability to have virtual meetings, or the ability to work from home.

I mentioned that the Federal government is now funding our 50 Million Tree Program which will continue for at least another 3 years. They came to our rescue in June 2019 and our positive relationship has continued to flourish. They recognized the values of large-scale tree plantings for the multiple benefits it provides for climate, biodiversity and for people in terms of our health and well-being and for green jobs. Indeed, the federal government has greatly expanded that effort, with the announcement of the 2 Billion Tree Program, which is Canada's response to the UN's 1 trillion tree program. More than \$3.1 billion has been allocated to that program for the planting of 2 billion trees by 2030. It is a noble and exciting component of the federal government's efforts to "build back better with nature-based solutions". That effort also complements efforts to expand grassland and wetland protection and restoration, while also increasing protected areas to 30% by 2030. We are indeed the "nature nation".

Forests Ontario has been well recognized by the Federal government and many national ENGOS for our expertise and excellent record in successfully delivering large-scale forest restoration projects. That recognition was further secured through our participation at the Nature-based Climate Solutions Summit held last February in Ottawa. We don't just talk the talk, we deliver on the talk! That practitioner role, distinguishes us from many other ENGOS.

We are increasingly seen as the voice for Ontario's forests and indeed Canada's forests and we are seen as the "go to" organization for meaningful solutions on the landscape for both forests and for grasslands. And that is true whether you are talking with folks from the forestry sector, the government sector, the environmental sector or the broader public. That role needs to continue to grow.

So yes the year has been challenging, but we are stronger and more focused than ever. By the way, that speaks volumes about all of our great staff and our leadership under Rob Keen. We are where we are because of their great leadership, their passion, demonstrated adaptability and their ability to deliver meaningful programs, even under the stress of a global pandemic.

Our success depends on a number of key factors all aligning. And in spite of the all of the challenges we have faced, we continue to grow in relevance as practical practitioners delivering on a noble vision and mission that now has national and global relevance as we build back better with nature-based solutions. That notion has been the driver for all we do.

Clearly we need you as members, supporters and funders, but frankly you would not be members, nor would we have the broad public support that we have seen, if we did not have a noble mission, excellent programs and a proven record in delivering our programs.

I have stated this in previous AGMs and will state it again: We know what we are about and we know where we are going.

We have a noble mission: *to be the voice for our forests and the “go to” organization by supporting forest restoration, stewardship, excellence in education and building awareness* on the need for healthy forested landscapes and its absolute relevance to our own health and well-being and economic prosperity. We also need it for our own safety in terms of climate resilience and for the conservation of forest biodiversity, the rest of life that makes our forests healthy, functioning ecosystems. We have been, and continue to be, champions for the delivery of “nature-based solutions”.

That mission is driven by a **simple, yet profound vision: *healthy forested landscapes sustaining healthy people and providing the renewable resources for a healthy economy.***

And it is supported by **four key high level goals** which help to define and drive the great programs that we do have. At a high level those goals pertain to:

1. ***Developing and supporting forest restoration and stewardship programs.*** The 50M tree program is an example of our flagship forest restoration program, and there are others, like Forest Recovery Canada.
2. ***Building awareness on the need for healthy forests.*** Just take a look at our excellent communication efforts, including “Our Forest” magazine; or our “It takes a Forest Campaign”; and our annual conference, “Growing our Forest”, which for the first time ever, will be a virtual conference, spread over 3 days from Feb. 3rd-5th. I hope you will join us.
3. ***Developing and supporting forest education programs.*** Ontario Envirothon and TD’s Tree Bee are but two of our notable programs that were delivered virtually this year inspiring a new generation of foresters and environmentalists; and finally.
4. ***Strengthening organizational capacity to deliver on all those programs and our mission.***

Our strategic plan has served us well to date, and will be renewed and refined to ensure that it will continue to serve us well as we look to the future in our efforts to build back better with nature-based solutions.

As for the future, opportunities abound and we need to position ourselves, yet again, as the go-to organization for delivery on forest restoration and education. We have earned a very positive reputation provincially, nationally and even internationally. Indeed we have just recently been recognized by UNEP as an “Official Restoration Implementer of the U.N Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030”. That, to me, is a source of great pride. We have come a long ways in a relatively short time. We must build on that solid foundation.

As I have mentioned, the future is looking much brighter at the national level as the federal government has committed to “build back better” with nature-based solutions for climate,

biodiversity and for people. As I said, that includes an ambitious commitment to planting 2 billion trees by 2030, as well as enhancing grasslands, wetlands and protected areas. Therein lay the opportunity: large scale planting of the **“right native species in the right places for the right reasons”**, all of which aligns with our organizational vision: Healthy ecosystems sustaining healthy people and a healthy economy.

We have developed the needed framework and infrastructure for large scale success including: seed forecasting, collection, processing, and storage; nursery stock production; a network of experienced planting delivery agents; post plant survival assessments and monitoring; database development and management; and climate change adaptation considerations – offering an unmatched level of accountability. I think we can safely say that Forests Ontario is the only non-profit organization in Canada with the infrastructure in place to support a successful, large-scale tree planting program. Although we recognize that there will be a wide variety of tree planting initiatives across Canada to achieve the 2 BTP, we hope that we can play a significant role in helping the federal government achieve that laudable goal.

The Board: Organizationally, I feel extremely fortunate in having the privilege to chair a board of great talent, experience, knowledge and passion for Ontario’s forests. A board that truly is “future-oriented” and a board who has demonstrated its ability to roll up its sleeves and work together for a more robust future for this organization. As I said, this has been another extremely challenging year. We rose to the challenge, yet again, and I thank all of them for their efforts and support.

They have set the strategic vision and plan for the organization and have provided the needed oversight and due diligence to make this organization all that it can be. And they too have demonstrated flexibility and adaptability as we continue to face to new challenges and ways of working.

Our board members include:

- Malcolm Cecil -Cockwell– Vice President
- Michael Klasner – Treasurer
- Riet Verheggen – Secretary
- Kim Gavine
- Peter Johnson
- Christine Leduc
- Gail Beggs
- Dr. Bob Hyland
- David Sisam
- Bonny Skene
- and myself, Steve Hounsell, President and Chair

This is your board. I thank you all for your contributions and for getting us to where we are!!

Staff: The most experienced and insightful board means little if you do not have superb staff to translate plans into action. We continue to be blessed with great staff, starting at the top with our CEO and that extends to all of our staff. I know it and I hear it all the time from our board members who have engaged staff and indeed from our partner organizations. Indeed it is our staff and our partners who deliver on all of our excellent programs. They translate our words of direction into meaningful actions.

Speaking of our CEO, Rob Keen, I have known Rob for a good many years and have worked closely with him for more than a decade. Rob epitomizes “passion for the issue”. This is more than just a job for Rob. He seems to be on it 24/7, always working to find better ways of connecting people to our forests, building a collaboration of practitioners, building pride for the profession and the cause, and making us the “go to” organization for all things about forests. And yet again, Rob has demonstrated great flexibility and adaptability in managing this organization through a pandemic.

We have come a long ways and much of that credit goes to Rob. It has been my pleasure working with you. **On behalf of all of us on the board, thank you Rob!**

And that same passion and chemistry extends to all of the staff, and all of the programs that they are working on. They demonstrate knowledge, maturity and experience well beyond their years and it clearly shows in the work that they do.

Rob, on behalf of me, the board and all of us, please extend our appreciation and sincere thanks to all of the staff! They need to know how much we appreciate their efforts.

In summary, this has been quite a year for us, with both lows and highs. The good news is that we have emerged as an organization with both hope and opportunity for the future. We are focused and we are building momentum as champions of nature-based solutions. Stay tuned, as we have much more to accomplish in the coming year and beyond. Thank you.

I would like to request a motion for acceptance of the 2020 President’s report.

Motion to accept the 2020 President’s Report.

Moved: David Sisam

Seconded: Donald MacDonald

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

6. PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

Our Treasurer Michael Klasner will be presenting our Financial Statements for year ending September 30, 2020 and the associated motion to approve those statements. As well, Susan Cumming, Forests Ontario's Financial Advisor is here to assist with any questions.

MOTION BY TREASURER (PRESIDENT): To accept the Financial Statement ending September 30, 2020.

Moved: Malcolm Cockwell

Seconded: Jim Farrell

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

7. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT (members have been provided Nominating Committee Report) (Bob Hyland – Chair)

Nominating Committee Members

- Robert Hyland (Chair)
- Steve Hounsell
- Riet VerHeggen
- Rob Keen

RESOLVED THAT the following persons are affirmed as Directors of the Corporation, to hold office for the term set forth opposite their respective or until their successors are duly elected or appointed, namely:

- Gail Beggs (2024)
- Malcolm Cecil-Cockwell (2024)
- Kim Gavine (2024)
- Michael Klasner (2024)
- Steve Hounsell (2022)
- Peter Johnson (2022)
- Bonny Skene (2023)
- Riet M. VerHeggen (2023)
- Christine Leduc (2024)
- Dr. Robert Hyland (2023)
- David Sisam (2022)

Moved: Donald MacDonald

Seconded: Carol Walker

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

Election of Directors

The following individual has expressed an interest in being a Director of Forests Ontario:

Sydney Oaks:

Sydney Oaks completed her undergraduate degree at Trent University in Politics and Indigenous Studies, studied Indigenous eco-tourism models at the Universidad Tecnológica del Valle del Mezquital in Mexico, and completed her Master's degree at McMaster University in the Public Policy and Administration program, where she was a contributor to 'Indigenous Futures: Research Sovereignty in a Changing Social Science Landscape' (2017).

Previously, Sydney was one of ten Canadians chosen for the Ontario Legislative Internship Programme's Fellowship at Queen's Park where she advised MPPs in both government and opposition, including the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, where she focused on legislation, strategy, research, constituency affairs, speech writing, and public relations.

Most recently, Sydney produced government relations strategies as the Director of Policy and Provincial Affairs for the Chiefs of Ontario, the official non-partisan and non-profit organization which advocates for the collective interests of the 133 First Nations communities in Ontario, where she also served as its lead liaison to the 50 Million Tree Program.

Sydney presently serves as an Executive Member for the Young Diplomats of Canada (Strategic Partnerships), the Board of Directors for the Petawawa Military Family Resource Centre (Finance & Accreditation Canada), and is a co-founding Principal Partner of "Provoke Public Relations.

RESOLVED THAT Sydney Oaks become a Forests Ontario Director:

Moved: David Sisam

Seconded: Rob Galloway

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES



8. REPORT OF THE CEO – ROB KEEN

It is my pleasure to invite our CEO, Rob Keen to provide you with some of the highlights from the past year, just to show you that we have been busy and that we are moving forwards with success as the voice for Ontario's forests.

Steve as chair and president for so long, true inspiration. Excited to do what you do when the passion from the board is there. Board is supportive of direction we are going in. 2019, lost the program, got the program back with the feds, would be nice to have a full year of tree planting. Engagement with the feds prior to covid-19. Looking at Forests Ontario as a model to how to move forward on the 2 billion tree program. Asking us, how we engage with landowners? How we do fundraising? Adaptability of our programs, and minister O'Regan announcement. They see it, and realize the value and complexity of the targets they're trying to achieve. Will require a lot of effort across the landscape.

Spring plant was coming up, staff pulled out all the stops to get an unprecedented number of trees planted. Great to see the enthusiasm of the staff. Then, COVID hit, as Michael mentioned, through good planning or good luck we had staff that had put together a comprehensive IT system. Because of that, it was relatively smooth transition to work from home and staff adapted quickly. Barely skipped a beat. Hats off to all the staff. The partners, considering whether tree planting would be considered an essential service. The boarders, migrant labourers who were meant to come up for the spring. The partners developed protocols, and we got the job done. There could have been a lot of folks who would have walked away, but the tree planting fraternity is committed to what they do. We had one of our partners with issues about migrant workers. We volunteered our staff to come pull trees. There were about another half a dozen partners who offered the same thing. True show of Canadians coming together and working together to make it work. Hats off to all of our partners who got the job done. Near 10% of the target for the season between what was planted and what we aimed to plant.

Fast forward to discussions with federal government, they understand the complexity. On Dec. 14th, 3.16 billion dollars was announced by minister O'Regan to start planting by spring 2021. Continue to wait for further details to come from the Federal Government. To give you some perspective with regards to afforestation we are planting 10-15 million trees per year right now across Canada. In order to hit the 2 billion tree target we need plant 200 million trees per year. We need to have long term sustainable funding in place for the fraternity of tree planters to invest in their own infrastructure to make this happen.

It's great to see the program working, the 50 million program being used as a model to hit the 2 billion tree target. Minister O'Regan will be kicking off our conference with a pre-recorded video. Exciting time, but COVID makes it more interesting. The staff show the team spirit and exemplify the passion for the job. Spirits have been maintained and they're ready to keep going whatever comes next.

On the deficit situation, the gap occurred because one of the contracts finished Mar 21st, 2020 and it took until Sept to get the next contract. 15 million over 4 years was the commitment, and the 5 month gap in funding happened. The short hiccup between 50 million cancellation and the cohesiveness of it. Taking a break and stopping working would have taken a big hit to the programs. Worth it that the wheels didn't come off, that we didn't lose good people and the nurseries didn't stop growing stock. Forests Ontario does have skin in the game. It speaks to the commitment of our staff, our board. And to our supporters and sponsors we need more donations to make it work. We look forward to less interesting times, some normalcy would be great. Looks forward to moving forward on 2 billion tree program.

9. APPROVAL OF ACTS OF DIRECTORS AS RECORDED IN MINUTES DURING PAST YEAR.

RESOLVED THAT all acts and proceedings of the Board of Directors for the period of Oct 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, as set out in the minutes, reports and mailings to members, be approved, sanctioned, and confirmed."

Moved: Donald MacDonald

Seconded: Peter Gagnon

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

10. APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITOR – KPMG

RESOLVED THAT KPMG be reappointed as the Auditor of the Corporation, and the Board of Directors be authorized to fix remuneration for the service.

Moved: Michael Klasner

Seconded: David Sisam

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

11. NEW BUSINESS

Is there is any new business to be discussed?

YES: _____. If yes, hear the issue and decide on appropriate action.

NO: _____.

Martin asked if anyone can update us on: seed sourcing, the seed plant property?

Seed plant has been completely dismantled, and it's devastating to lose that resource, nurseries have begun increasing their own infrastructure to store seed, process seed, and facilitate their own demands for seed and grow the stock. We continue to work with FGCA to ensure we have a diversity of seed moving forward. Nurseries don't have the capacity to do seed sourcing, so we work with the FGCA to do this. We have impressed upon the Federal Government how important seed sourcing is and they get it, we are hoping they will incorporate this into part of the 2 billion tree program. FGCA and FO have continued to work together, and could certainly use more resources. We do have a seed database that was developed when the seed plant was dismantled, it's a seed bank so we can see what seed is where.

Overview of the validation study from Liz: we were working with NRCAN, they were asking about our data about sites, so we provided data from 2008 -2016 for all planting sites through the 50 million tree program. It was great for them to do that, they basically overlayed our data onto GIS to see if the trees we planted were still on the landscape, and 82% of the hectares that we have planted are still on the landscape. Our planting practices are providing forests for the future. We're collecting data, the seedlings planted, the methods of planting, the fact that we're doing survival assessments really shows what we do is a positive thing, and we have those trees that are converting into forests. Talking to the government about the 2 billion tree program, they're really using our model to make sure that the program is as successful as our 50 Million Tree Program.

Tracy - Rob/Steve — do you anticipate any permanent changes with respect to the Front Street office space post covid.

Rob: With COVID, we barely skipped a beat with staff working from home. Staff are more productive working from home. What's missing is the face-to-face and social engagement with staff. We recognize we don't need the space we have and are looking into options for smaller office space, where it may be located, accessibility, other features staff are looking for. Staff wants to be able to have a place to get together, so we are looking at it to see what the best alternative might be.

12. DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL MEETING

I would like to request if the date of the next Annual General Meeting of members be left to the call of the President.

If it is agreed – members will be advised as to where and when the 2022 Annual General Meeting will be held.

13. TERMINATION OF MEETING

If no further business:

RESOLVED THAT the 7th annual meeting of the members of the Forests Ontario be terminated.

Moved: Michael Klasner

Seconded: Jim Galloway

Discussion:

Those in FAVOUR: ALL OPPOSED: 0 CARRIED: YES

The 7th annual meeting of the members of Forests Ontario was declared terminated at 6:12 p.m.

Notes on new business: