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February 5th, 2020

Joe Maure
Forest Sector Strategy - Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
70 Foster Drive, Suite 610
Sault Ste Marie, ON
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Canada

Submitted Online Via the Environmental Registry of Ontario

Re: Abitibi River Forest Management Inc. (ARFMI) - Support for Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy, ERO# 019-0880

Dear Mr. Maure,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy, Environmental Registry of Ontario number 019-0880. We would like to express our support for the Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy and reaffirm our commitment, as stewards of Ontario's public forests, to the highest standards of sustainable forest management.

ARFMI has been responsible for the successful forest management of approximately 3.2 million hectares in Northeastern Ontario since 2010. This submission represents ARFMI's experience and knowledge managing and conserving this renewable resource across Ontario's largest SFL license area. As a successful co-op tenure model, ARFMI has 10 consuming/harvester shareholders, 7 independent harvester shareholders and 3 First Nation shareholders, all of whom hold an equity stake in this forest management company. Collectively, our company and its shareholders employ 100's of people working in the forest; harvesting and renewing the forest each year and 1,000's of people benefiting from this renewable resource with employment in 7 local mills. An Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy is vital in ensuring this industry continues to support the communities our workers live in.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNR) vision of establishing Ontario's forest sector as a world leader in producing and selling forest products from renewable, sustainable and responsibly managed forests is an ambitious one. The draft includes five key principles and four pillars of action related to putting more wood to work, improving cost competitiveness, fostering innovation, and promoting stewardship and sustainability. The MNR should take pride in the document they have created.

Through the development and implementation of a Forest Sector Strategy, Ontario has committed to positioning itself as a leading forestry jurisdiction within Canada. A healthy and sustainable forest industry will strengthen our local northern and rural communities. Increasing available wood supply, making strategic investments in the forest access roads funding program, and ensuring free and open access to American markets is critically important, and these items continue to be priority for ARFMI.

A pre-requisite for a successful Forest Sector Strategy is a permanent solution to the duplication between the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). I am pleased to see that MNR is actively addressing this item, and I am very supportive of ERO# 019-1020, Proposed Changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

Ontario and the MNR embarked on similar strategies, red tape reduction initiatives, and process streamlining in the past. Some excellent documents and recommendations were developed as a result; however, not enough focus was placed on the implementation or roll-out of these strategies. As a result, systematic and cultural change within the Ministry was never achieved. On page 32 of the draft strategy, MNR identifies the development of an implementation plan. This is an essential path forward, ensuring our best chance of success, and something this SFL company supports.

The forest sector is an important part of Ontario's history and remains critical to the future of our company, our shareholder businesses business and the communities they support. I would like to thank the Ontario Government and the MNR for their leadership on this file and look forward to reviewing the finalized strategy.

Sincerely,
ABITIBI RIVER FOREST MANAGEMENT INC.

Bree Andrews, R.P.F.
General Manager

CC Minister John Yakabuski, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Minister Jeff Yurek, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Jamie Lim, President & CEO, Ontario Forest Industries Association
ARFMI Board of Directors