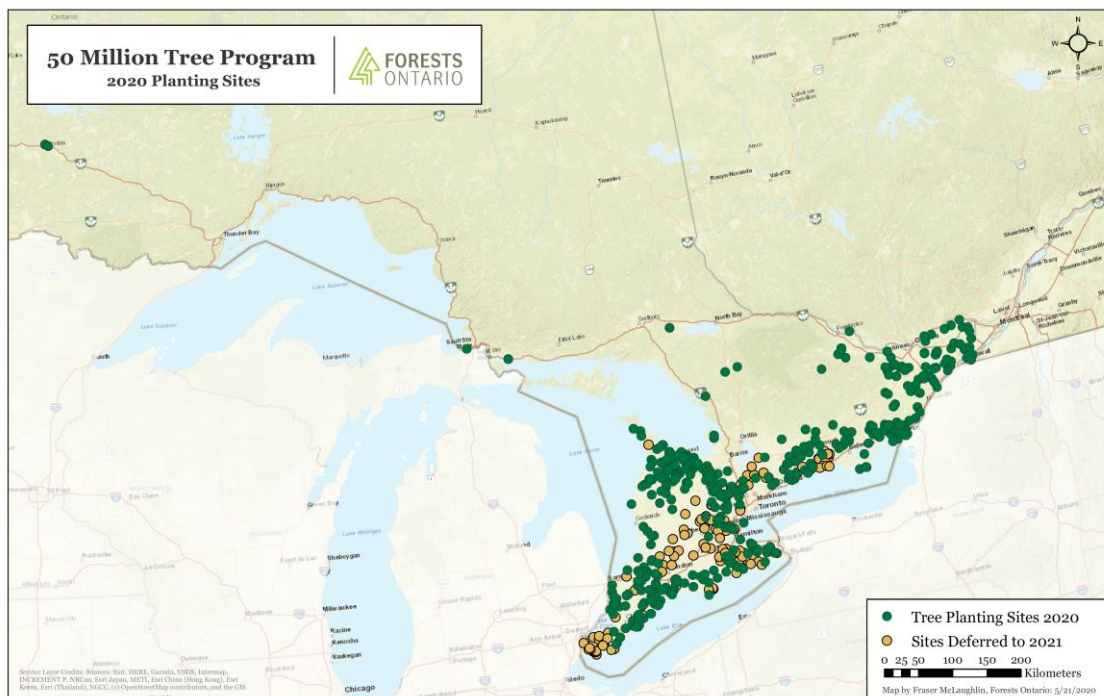


## **On World Environment Day, Forests Ontario says 2020 tree-planting season was a success despite COVID-19**

**[Toronto, ON. June 4, 2020]** -- This World Environment Day (June 5<sup>th</sup>), Forests Ontario celebrates the first anniversary of receiving federal funding for their 50 Million Tree Program (50 MTP). They report that their 2020 planting season ended just 10 per cent under target, despite COVID-19 related challenges.

Rob Keen, Forests Ontario's CEO and a Registered Professional Forester, observed that, "Only 10 per cent of the planned 2,466,000 trees will not be planted. Coming so close to a target set long before anyone had heard of COVID-19 is close to a miracle. Without the experience, expertise and enormous efforts of our nursery and tree planting partners from across Ontario, and the federal funding we received, it could not have been done."



Keen described some of the challenges they faced, "COVID-19 dominated every conversation. The tree nurseries were short on staff that were needed to prepare the

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seedlings, there was confusion over the 'essential service status' of tree planting, we needed to ensure over 300 tree planters could do their jobs while social distancing and educating landowners that the job could be done without endangering them. Thankfully, in the end we planted more trees than we could have imagined when the pandemic first appeared."

The federal funding announced on June 5, 2019, by former Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, saved the 50 MTP, which had had its funding cut by the Government of Ontario. The federal government committed up to \$15 million over four years, with additional funding coming from corporate sponsors and donors. The program support is overseen by Minister of Natural Resources, Seamus O'Regan.

"Thanks to support from Minister O'Regan's department and others, we are already getting ready for a robust 2021 planting season – hopefully without COVID-19," said Keen. He concluded, "If you have room to plant a minimum of 500 trees – which is usually less than an acre – we would be happy to discuss your tree planting options."

Minister O'Regan observed, "As Canada works to address the challenges caused by COVID-19, this is an example of the innovation of the forestry sector at its best. With hard work, commitment, and trademark Canadian ingenuity, a successful tree planting season has been completed."

Forests Ontario has facilitated the planting of more than 30 million trees through the 50 MTP. It is the leading non-profit organization for the delivery of high-quality, large-scale tree planting.

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### **For additional information, photos or to arrange an interview please contact:**

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### **About Forests Ontario**

Forests Ontario is a not-for-profit charity dedicated to re-greening the province



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through the support of forest restoration, stewardship, education and awareness. We promote Canada's greatest natural resource - our forests - because healthy forests sustain healthy communities and healthy economies. Visit [www.forestsontario.ca](http://www.forestsontario.ca) or follow us @Forests\_Ontario to find out more.