

## **Bridging the Gap Research Project Aims to Understand Labour Shortages in the Forestry Sector**

**Barrie, Ont. (February 2, 2023)** – Industries across Canada are seeing a large portion of their workforce retire without the ability to replace them, and the forestry sector is no exception. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the forestry sector is experiencing a labour force and skill shortage that is preventing the sector from realizing its full economic potential. If left unchecked, this shortage could negatively impact the socio-economic standing of hundreds of communities across the province of Ontario for years to come.

To address this issue, Forests Ontario – the province’s leading charity dedicated to the creation, preservation, and maintenance of forest and grassland habitats – and the Ontario Forest Industries Association (OFIA), with support from an advisory committee, collaborated on [\*Bridging the Gap Between Ontario’s Youth & the Provincial Forest Sector\*](#), an Employment Ontario research project (known simply as Bridging the Gap) funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

“The forestry sector is faced with labour shortages across a variety of roles, and these are expected to increase over the next 5 to 10 years,” says Ian Dunn, President & CEO, Ontario Forest Industries Association. “We are seeing gaps and misconceptions that prevent some youth from considering a career in the industry, which is why the Bridging the Gap research is so important.”

The objectives of the Bridging the Gap research project were twofold. First, the project generated a detailed understanding of job vacancies and the associated training and educational requirements needed to fill these openings. Secondly, the project provided critical insight into the perceptions of youth and Indigenous youth, teachers, and parents with respect to forestry and the forestry sector as a potential area of employment.

“While already integral to many communities today, the forestry sector will become even more important in the coming years as sustainably produced forest products are further recognized as a tool in the fight against climate change,” says Rob Keen, Registered Professional Forester and Forests Ontario Chief Executive Officer. “Looking toward to the future, we need youth in the forestry sector – Bridging the Gap research findings will enable this growing industry to better and more effectively communicate with students and young adults to identify and recruit the skilled labour the sector needs.”

According to Bridging the Gap research, to effectively compete with other industries and attract and retain a workforce that can sustain continuous growth, the forestry sector will need to build better awareness and engagement with youth, so they consider forestry as a viable, enticing option when choosing their career paths.

Full details of the research project are available on the Forests Ontario ([www.forestsontario.ca/en/resource/bridging-the-gap](http://www.forestsontario.ca/en/resource/bridging-the-gap)) and It Takes a Forest ([www.ittakesaforest.ca/forest-stewardship/forestry-education-career-pathways/](http://www.ittakesaforest.ca/forest-stewardship/forestry-education-career-pathways/)) websites.

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**For more information or to request an interview, please contact:**

**Matthew Brown**

Communications Manager  
Forests Ontario / Forest Recovery Canada  
Cell: 519-471-4751  
E-mail: [MBrown@forestsontario.ca](mailto:MBrown@forestsontario.ca)

**About Forests Ontario, Forest Recovery Canada, and It Takes a Forest**

Forests Ontario is the province's leading charity dedicated to the creation, preservation, and maintenance of forest and grassland habitats. Our ambitious, large-scale tree planting initiatives, extensive educational programs, and decades of community outreach result in millions of trees being planted each year.

Together with our national division, Forest Recovery Canada, we work with our many partners across the country to plant native trees and ensure our efforts today thrive and grow into tomorrow's diverse, healthy, and resilient forests.

It Takes a Forest is an initiative led by Forests Ontario in partnership with local, like-minded individuals and organizations with a common goal of providing the public with unbiased, fact-based information on Ontario's forest sector and the role of our forests as one of the province's most sustainable resources.

Forests Ontario is the voice for our forests.

Visit [www.forestsontario.ca](http://www.forestsontario.ca) or follow us @Forests\_Ontario to find out more.

**About Forests Ontario's Annual Conference**

Forests Ontario's 9th Annual Conference is February 16 & 17. The event will be hybrid – meaning attendees can choose to join in-person at the Nottawasaga Inn Resort & Conference Centre in Alliston, Ontario, or participate virtually online.

Forests Ontario has an exciting couple of days planned with leading experts, engaging discussions, and incredible networking opportunities to connect and inspire you. Headlining the roster of speakers is Natalie Panek, rocket scientist, adventurer, and advocate for women in technology. Natalie will be joined by sector leaders from across Canada who will be exploring the human, ecological and climate impacts on our natural environments, and the integral role nature and forests play in our everyday lives. Learn more at [www.forestsontario.ca/conference](http://www.forestsontario.ca/conference).

## About the Ontario Forest Industries Association (OFIA)

For nearly 80 years, the OFIA has represented forestry companies ranging from multinational corporations to family-owned businesses across Ontario. OFIA's member companies produce a variety of renewable forest products, including dimensional lumber, pulp and paper, packaging, clean energy, and engineered wood products. OFIA members invest heavily into advanced research, development, and innovative technologies, supporting a transition towards net-zero.

Today, Ontario's forest industry generates over \$18 billion in revenue and supports over 149,000 direct and indirect jobs in communities across the province.

To learn more about OFIA, follow them on Twitter @OFIA\_info or visit [www.ofia.com](http://www.ofia.com).

### Photo



Caption: Students in Timmins, Ontario learning about forest sector careers at Forestry Connects training.