

Forests Ontario Recognizes Sault Ste. Marie's Brent Attwell for Contributions to Forestry and the Environment

- [Forests Ontario](#), together with its national division [Forest Recovery Canada](#), is dedicated to the creation, restoration and maintenance of forest and grassland habitats.
- Forests Ontario's Annual Conference is the largest conference in the province about the importance of healthy, resilient forests.

Barrie, Ont. (February 29, 2024) – Canada's forests are facing extraordinary challenges, including climate change, increased fires, biodiversity loss, and invasive species – so recognizing those who are most passionate about our forests is more important than ever. At Forests Ontario's Annual Conference yesterday at the Universal Eventspace in Vaughan, Ontario, Forests Ontario recognized important contributors to forestry and the environment with an awards ceremony.

Forests Ontario would like to congratulate Sault Ste. Marie's award recipient:

The Most Valuable Planter Award | Brent Attwell: The Most Valuable Planter Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the health of our natural ecosystems through tree planting initiatives.

Brent is from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and graduated from Lakehead University in 1998. He began tree planting as a summer student in 1996 for the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. After graduation, he formed his consulting business and started tree planting for a variety of conservation authorities.

In 2002, he moved to Sault Ste. Marie where he played a key role in advocating for tree planting in the north, including being a voice for expansion of Forests Ontario's 50 Million Tree Program into the north. In 2014, the first 50 Million Tree Program trees planted in Northern Ontario were planted by Brent's consulting business, REGEN Natural Resources Ltd., in Algoma District. Since that time, he and his company have planted nearly 500,000 trees for a range of clients with plans to plant 150,000 in 2024.

Forests Ontario would also like to congratulate all other award recipients:

The Forests Ontario Award | Rob Keen: The Forests Ontario Award is presented to individuals for outstanding achievements in, and contributions to, the field of forestry education in Canada and beyond.

Rob is from Huntsville, Ontario and is a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) who for over 20 years led Forests Ontario to being the success it is today. In 2011, Rob assumed the role of CEO of Trees Ontario and in 2014, after coordinating the merger of the Ontario Forestry Association and Trees Ontario, continued the role of CEO of the newly formed Forests Ontario until 2023.

Rob played an instrumental role in supporting the planting of over 43 million trees across Canada by establishing a full-service tree planting model from seed to nursery to planting partner and maintenance, and ensuring the work being done across the landscape delivered high-quality results. In 2023, after stepping down from Forests Ontario, Rob was hired to establish the Canadian Tree Nursery Association, which currently supports 54 nurseries that grow over 630 million native seedlings annually.

Over his 40-year career in forestry, Rob has been involved in many facets of the forestry industry, including providing forestry services to landowners, developing forest management plans, conducting wood supply and feasibility studies, and participating in forest audits.

The Forest Stewardship Award | Ken Elliott: The Forest Stewardship Award is presented to individuals for outstanding activities in private land forest management and strong support for forestry promotion, education, and understanding.

Ken is a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) from Ennismore, Ontario and graduated from Lakehead University in 1986. He retired in 2022 after a distinguished 36-year career with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and is well-known and respected throughout the forestry community as a keen collaborator and supporter of professionalism and positive change.

He held a number of forestry positions throughout his career, including 17 years as a Regional Forestry Specialist, where he co-operatively initiated, designed, and conducted scientific research to determine the effects of silviculture on forest structure, composition, and health.

Ken has authored or co-authored over 30 journal articles, has been an instructor for the Ontario Tree Marking Certification program since 1999, and has now embarked on a new career as Senior Forester for FSmith Consulting Inc.

The Forest Stewardship Award | Martin Litchfield: Martin is a retired Registered Professional Forester (RPF) from Guelph, Ontario with senior management experience in both the forest industry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. He also developed a forest management consulting company with a focus on business development and forest certification in all 10 provinces and five American states.

As Vice-President of Trees for Guelph, Martin has volunteered countless hours to enhance and support the urban forest environment and has helped plant 9,500 trees, shrubs and wildflower plugs at 30 planting events.

Martin's wife, Beth, remarked that his career started as a tree plant supervisor with MacMillan Bloedel in British Columbia and now, 52 years later, he is supervising tree planting with five- and six-year-old students and couldn't be happier.

The Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award | Mark Sherman: The Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award is presented to individuals in recognition of outstanding contributions to forestry education in Ontario.

Mark is a multi-year forest education volunteer with Forests Ontario from Toronto, Ontario. He has committed time to both Forests Ontario's Forestry in the Classroom program – delivering more than 13 presentations to reach more than 330 youth and educators in the past two years – as well as the Ontario Envirothon.

Mark holds a certificate in Arboriculture from Humber College and a degree in Urban Planning from Toronto Metropolitan University. He is known to draw on his comprehensive knowledge of arboriculture and urban forestry concepts to support planning with the City of Toronto. Mark also helps coordinate community tree planting and stewardship and environmental education events across Toronto.

The Green Legacy Award | Enbridge Gas: The Green Legacy Award is presented to a visionary corporate partner that is instrumental in ensuring a green legacy for future generations.

Enbridge Gas has been serving customers for over 175 years. Enbridge is committed to protecting our environment, making the transition to a clean energy future through net-zero emissions targets and investments in innovative low-carbon energy solutions. Enbridge's support of Forests Ontario is one example of how they are taking measures towards creating a more sustainable future by investing and partnering locally.

Since 2014, Enbridge Gas has supported forest restoration and education efforts through contributions to Forests Ontario's tree planting, forest education and community awareness initiatives. Having donated over \$230,000 to Forests Ontario's programs over nearly 10 years, Enbridge Gas is supporting sustainability projects to help improve and grow our natural environment.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Matthew Brown

Communications Manager

Forests Ontario / Forest Recovery Canada

Cell: 519-471-4751

E-mail: MBrown@forestsontario.ca

About Forests Ontario & Forest Recovery Canada

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.

Visit www.forestsontario.ca or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#) to find out more.

Photo



Caption: Forests Ontario Field Advisor Peter Gagnon (left) and Brent Attwell, who received The Most Valuable Planter Award at Forests Ontario's 2024 Annual Conference.