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MEDIA RELEASE

Forests Ontario's Annual Conference Celebrates Forest Sector Champions

Peterborough resident recognized with Forests Ontario Award

Ontario [February 10, 2022] – Forests Ontario's 8th Annual Conference is bringing together more than 800 landowners, forestry professionals, Indigenous leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, and students from across the country and around the world. *Strength in Biodiversity* is a multi-day virtual event running until February 11, and explores the ways biodiversity is fundamental to ensuring healthy ecosystems and communities.

"We know that addressing nature can be an important element in addressing the twin climate crises of climate change and biodiversity loss," said the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Natural Resources, who sent a pre-recorded video message to kick off the Conference. "It is a pleasure to be part of this Conference. I believe that we must ensure that our forests and our ecosystems remain healthy, resilient, and diverse in the face of a changing climate. We need to ensure that a focus on nature-based solutions is part of our overall plan for combatting climate change."

Rob Keen, Registered Professional Forester and CEO of Forests Ontario and Forest Recovery Canada, is very encouraged to see so many participants focusing on supporting biodiversity. "We know about the multiple benefits that nature-based solutions can bring in the fight against climate change, but it's important to remember that biodiversity is a key element for a healthy future," Keen said. "This year, our Annual Conference is highlighting these efforts and showcasing dozens of experts working towards reducing biodiversity loss and ensuring healthy, thriving forests for our future."

Forests Ontario's annual event is the largest forestry conference of its kind in the province. This year's virtual Conference features 40 sector leaders presenting in six sessions, as well as more than 25 exhibitor and sponsor booths. It offers networking opportunities and an Awards Ceremony which recognizes the following important contributors to forestry and biodiversity:

- **Forests Ontario Award:** This award goes to individuals for outstanding achievements and contributions to forestry education in Canada and beyond. This year, the award goes to the ten individuals who were instrumental in the creation and delivery of the Ontario Tree Marking Program: **Al Corlett** (Toronto), **Scott Reid** (Port Sydney), **Brian Batchelor** (North Bay), **Bob Dynes** (Bancroft), **Brian Naylor** (North Bay), **Kerry Sinibaldi** (Sault Ste. Marie), **Al Stinson** (North Bay), **Jeff Leavey** (Huntsville), **Mike Walsh** (Peterborough), and **Steve Munro** (Parry Sound). In 1993, these individuals

established the Ontario Tree Marking Program, with the objective to implement consistency in the application of silvicultural tree marking on Crown lands, while incorporating leading-edge science to silvicultural and habitat management efforts. This group's dedication over recent decades advanced a successful, well-respected program.

- **Green Legacy Award:** This award celebrates a visionary corporate partner that has been instrumental in promoting a healthy environment for future generations. This year, the award goes to **Ontario Power Generation** in recognition for both its Regional Biodiversity Program which actively supports conservation organizations, and for its participation in the Eastern Ontario First Nations Working Group and inaugural launch of The Healing Place.
- **Robert de Pencier Award:** Presented to an individual(s) for outstanding activities in private land forest management and strong support of forestry promotion and education, this year's award celebrates **Eric and Barb Boysen** of Maberly, ON, for their dedication and commitment to projects that support healthy forests, and their contribution to the original structure of Forests Ontario's 50 Million Tree program.
- **Most Valuable Planter Award:** This award recognizes an outstanding individual or organization for their contribution to restoring ecosystem health through tree planting initiatives. This year, **Rick Knapton of Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA)** earned the designation of Most Valuable Planter. Knapton has been planting trees with Forests Ontario in the Kingston area since 2005, and has been a valued planting partner for decades. Through Forests Ontario's 50 Million Tree Program, CRCA has planted more than two million trees.
- **White Pine Award:** This award, which recognizes student contributions to forest education and awareness, went to **Ben Woodward**, Geography and Environmental Management student at the **University of Waterloo**. Woodward is an Ontario Envirothon alumnus and was an active Envirothon volunteer for the 2021 competition.
- **Susan Wiecek Forestry Education Award:** This award recognizes individuals or organizations for outstanding contributions to forestry education in Ontario. This year, the **Regional Municipality of York is recognized** for their continuous support of Forests Ontario's education programs. York Region has supported the Ontario Envirothon for more than 10 years, funded a regional Tree Bee competition for six years, and a pilot Virtual Hike project in 2021. York Region has also been a long-time partner with Forests Ontario at their annual Spring Forest Festival and more recently, the self-guided Discover Your Forest Kits.

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

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About Forests Ontario & Forest Recovery Canada

Forests Ontario is a leading charity dedicated to greening the communities in which we live work, and play. Our ambitious large-scale forest restoration programs, 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 the right tree in the right place for the right reason, ensuring our efforts today thrive and grow into healthy, diverse forests of tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Forests Ontario is the voice for our forests.

Visit www.forestsontario.ca or follow us @Forests_Ontario to find out more.

