

## **AFA Response to the ECO Report, October 2014.**

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) is an officer of the legislature responsible to oversee government's implementation of environmental legislation and responsibilities, including the functioning of the Environmental Bill of Rights and Environmental Registry.

The Algonquin Forestry Authority (AFA) is the Ontario Crown agency responsible for the sustainable management of the Algonquin Park Forest.

The Ontario Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for Algonquin Park and the AFA and as such has provided the following voluntary response included on page 177 of the ECO's October 2014 report.

### ***"3.4 Cutting into Ecological Integrity: Commercial Logging in Algonquin Provincial Park***

*Algonquin Provincial Park is unique in that it is the only provincial park in Ontario that permits commercial logging where it has occurred for well over 100 years.*

*This important economic driver for central Ontario is permitted through the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (2008), the Algonquin Park Management Plan, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (1994), and the Algonquin Forestry Authority Act (1990).*

*The amendment to the Algonquin Park Management Plan entitled "Lightening the Ecological Footprint of Logging" significantly enhanced the ecological integrity of Algonquin Park by increasing protection for important park values such as habitat connectivity, brook trout waters, species at risk, and under-represented ecosystems.*

*Although the plan amendment differed from the original recommendation from the Ontario Parks Board of Directors, the approved amendment included extensive public, aboriginal and stakeholder consultation and permanently added an area larger than the city of Toronto to protection zoning in Algonquin Park (over 96,000 hectares).*

*Forest management planning and operations in the park are subject to the requirements of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, which ensures that Crown forests are managed for the maintenance of long term health and sustainability.*

*This management plan amendment is intended to balance protection of Algonquin Provincial Park's natural, cultural, social and economic values."*

## **AFA Response**

After nearly forty years, the Algonquin Forestry Authority continues to carry out its mandate, legislated obligations and fulfill its vision and mission statements.

**VISION:** To achieve the highest standards of sustainable forest management practices, in order to maintain Park values for future generations.

**MISSION:** To ensure the long-term health of Algonquin's forests while producing a sustainable supply of forest products for the forest industry of the region.

Our work has withstood the scrutiny of Independent Forest Audits every five years since 1997, independent reviews of utilization and road construction practices, and the public consultation processes required as part of acquiring and maintaining a sustainable forest management (SFM) policy and plan since 2002. AFA's SFM policy and plan are certified to CSA Z809 and our environmental management system is certified to ISO 14001. The Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) forest management planning process also provides opportunity for open public comment and requires active engagement of stakeholders and the general public.

Recommendation #3: "The ECO recommends the Ministry of Natural Resources publicly commit to the end of commercial logging in Algonquin Provincial Park." The ECO recommendation is not a new one. The same recommendation has been the cornerstone of CPAWS and Wildlands League campaigns for many years. Fundamentally, these groups can only see a Park as a protected area. We are disappointed the ECO would take such a narrow view of the important multiple benefits provided by forest management in Algonquin Park.

The ECO asserts the Lightning the Ecological Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park (LTF) exercise is headed in the right direction, but did not go far enough to protect ecological integrity. AFA and MNRF have determined that there are wood supply impacts and that any more reduction of available forest management area would be detrimental to businesses and livelihoods.

Evidently, ecological integrity means different things to different people. Sustainable forest management practices are conducted to emulate natural ecological processes, therefore the work we perform to achieve sustainable forestry targets helps to maintain ecological integrity.

Cultural history is also an important component of provincial parks. One needs only to reflect on Algonquin's history to see that logging in a vast portion of the park is by design and is part of the area's cultural value.

Area communities (also known as people of Ontario) and many professionals support the Park's forest management program and its contribution to the economy and AFA's efforts to balance competing interests.