



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

SFI-00001

Ideas and solutions to secure Canada's recovery, empower Indigenous communities and combat climate change

*Leveraging the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) network to co-create, co-develop
and bring people together*

Written submission for the pre-budget consultations in advance of the 2021 Budget

Submitted by:

Kathy Abusow, President & CEO
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
kathy.abusow@sfiprogram.org
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Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government invest \$25 million in an Indigenous Forest Partnerships (IFP) Program that enables forest-focused relationship building and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, on top of mandated requirements (e.g. Duty to Consult), that runs parallel to the existing Indigenous Forestry Initiative.

Recommendation 2: That the federal government leverage leaders in the urban forestry space as well as existing networks and collaborators, including SFI and Project Learning Tree Canada, to assist in administering and executing the rollout of the two billion trees initiative; and invest \$300 million per year in additional tree plantings and maintenance in Canada's cities and towns.

Recommendation 3: That the federal government leverage sustainably managed forests and forest certification programs including SFI's extensive partnerships to ensure Canada meets its conservation and species at risk targets; and provide funding of \$2 million towards these efforts across the SFI network and other solutions-oriented conservation organizations.

Introduction

In what will be a fragile economic climate as Canada recovers from COVID-19, we must ensure we work together to support education, training and employment of natural resource professionals, ensuring we include youth, women, residents of rural communities and Indigenous people. For a successful green economic recovery, Canada must address climate change, invest in a strong green workforce, and ensure Indigenous co-creation of solutions and programs. Canada is at a crossroads and the choices we make today will directly impact our country in the years ahead. A huge opportunity awaits for Canada to truly make gains in charting a more fair and green path forward. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) stands ready to leverage our network and partnerships to bring people together as we pursue solutions and ideas that will make Canada more prosperous.

Forest-focused relationship building and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations

Recommendation 1: That the federal government invest \$25 million in an Indigenous Forest Partnerships (IFP) Program that enables forest-focused relationship building and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, on top of mandated requirements (e.g. Duty to Consult), that runs parallel to the existing Indigenous Forestry Initiative.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is clear: Indigenous Nations have an inherent right to self-determination, which includes freely pursuing their economic, social and cultural development. Additionally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action are clear that the corporate sector in Canada has an important role to play in co-creating the solutions that will ultimately make that future a reality.

Inclusive co-creation means sustainable change

SFI's experience as a facilitator and coordinator of diverse, multi-partner forest-focused collaborations, involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners across Canada, has proven that inclusive co-creation leads to sustainable change. We work with over 100 Indigenous communities across Canada in sustainable forest management, community engagement, education, and conservation. SFI believes that fostering space for meaningful forest-focused collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors at the local and regional levels is the most effective way to bring about inclusive and sustainable economic growth. For example, Project Learning Tree Canada, an initiative of SFI, has recently succeeded in awarding over 50 per cent of its 800 high quality work experiences to Indigenous youth under its Green Jobs program.

SFI supports the continuation and expansion of existing programs, like the Indigenous Forestry Initiative, that promote Indigenous community-led economic development initiatives in the forest sector. SFI recommends that the federal government invest in an Indigenous Forest Partnerships (IFP) Program that enables forest-focused relationship building and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, on top of mandated requirements (e.g. Duty to Consult), that runs parallel to the existing Indigenous Forestry Initiative.

Indigenous Forestry Partnerships: strategic collaboration and knowledge transfer

The Indigenous Forestry Partnerships program could be open to individual Indigenous and forest sector collaborations at the local or regional levels, and organizations that are strategically positioned to facilitate and support forest-focused relationship building and knowledge sharing at scale.

Funding from this proposed program could support:

- Initiatives and activities that develop shared understandings, identify communities' forest-focused priorities, and co-create collaborative solutions;
- Co-developed projects that are delivered through partnership and address identified priorities;
- Initiatives that equip Indigenous Peoples to transfer skills and perspectives developed through forest sector experiences into meaningful community service;
- Forest- and community-based knowledge sharing, including the translation and culturally appropriate adaptation of information resources;
- Honoraria and other financial supports that enable meaningful community participation in relationship-building processes;
- Locally relevant relationship-focused training, including inter-cultural competency training and conflict resolution, that enable forest sector actors to become more engaged and capable partners;
- Hiring staff to lead relationship coordination at the local or regional level;
- Training for non-Indigenous employers on issues related to diversity and creating welcoming work environments with a focus on Indigenous new-hires.

Creating a lasting environment in which Indigenous Nations throughout Canada are able to freely pursue and attain their self-determined priorities will require more than any single project-based funding program can deliver. It will require relationship-building and creative collaboration. What is required most are frameworks, supports, investments in shared knowledge and facilitators that can help make local, equity-driven partnership the new norm.

Planning beyond two billion trees

Recommendation 2: That the federal government leverage leaders in the urban forestry space as well as existing networks and collaborators, including SFI and Project Learning Tree Canada, to assist in administering and executing the rollout of the two billion trees initiative; and invest \$300 million per year in additional tree plantings and maintenance in Canada's cities and towns.

The government's two billion tree initiative will help reduce carbon in the atmosphere, support efforts to combat climate change and help contribute to sustainable forest management. It will also help rebuild Canada's forests that have or will have succumbed to recurring and ongoing threats such as fire, insect, disease and other ravages of climate change. Furthermore, it will help advance key priorities such as urban afforestation and contribute to economic growth across Canada.

Critical to this initiative's success is how and where these trees are planted, and how the forest is managed.

Our managed forest landscapes are ravaged by fire, insects, and disease, many of these ravages caused by climate change or intensified as a result of it. The two billion trees program needs to have sufficient funds to restore these forests and maintain a vibrant and healthy forest stock in rural areas. Sustainably managed forests in rural areas are large contributors to our quality of life and to our economic development. Consulting provincial governments, the SFI network and other partners who work closely on managed forest landscapes will help determine the appropriate budgetary needs which exceeds the current allocation.

Both rural and urban tree planting should be part of the two billion trees program. While both urban and rural trees help mitigate climate change, urban trees have additional benefits like helping to cool urban areas, and benefiting the health and welfare of urban populations. Additionally, they benefit more people on account of their location in the very places where people live, work, and play. About 30 million Canadians live in urban areas. In broad strokes, the Government of Canada should invest \$10 per year per person in additional tree plantings in Canada's cities and towns, amounting to \$300 million per year. Consulting municipalities should help refine the budgetary needs.

SFI and its partners — including government, industry, conservation groups, Indigenous communities and academics — manage over 125 million hectares of SFI-certified forestlands across Canada. SFI has the network, access to resources, and knowledge to help ensure the government's two billion trees initiative achieves real success in both rural and urban environments.

Sustainably managed forests for a green recovery

Recommendation 3: That the federal government leverage sustainably managed forests and forest certification programs including SFI's extensive partnerships to ensure Canada meets its conservation and species at risk targets; and provide funding of \$2 million towards these efforts across the SFI network and other solutions-oriented conservation organizations.

To help the government meet its conservation and biodiversity targets, SFI is currently engaged with a coalition of solution-oriented partners to identify areas of other effective conservation measures (OECMs) within managed forest landscapes on both public and private forests. Furthermore, we are engaged with provincial agencies to have these areas count towards Canada's conservation areas accounting framework.

Managed forest landscapes have great capacity to support conservation targets while providing employment and critically needed forest products. SFI certified organizations and other partners are working to help transfer knowledge and increase capacity of forest management organizations to identify suitable areas that meet OECM criteria on SFI sustainably managed landscapes across the country, and working to have them counted towards Canada's Target 1 goal.

SFI is also working to ensure species at risk are effectively managed on Canada's managed forest estate, working collaboratively with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and SFI certified organizations. It is imperative to ensure sustainably managed forests continue to protect, conserve and recover species at risk, and that forest certification is harnessed as a

mechanism in the implementation of Canada's *Species At Risk Act* (SARA) and the prevention of biodiversity loss in Canada.

Working with a range of conservation partners, \$2 million would offset costs of SFI / partner-led analysis and coordination across the SFI network and partners in the forest sector (including provincial government agencies) to identify OECMs for inclusion in Canada's conservation goals. Funds would also be used to develop and test actionable management activities and demonstrate positive conservation outcomes for species at risk across Canada's managed forest estate.

Conclusion

Creating jobs and economic opportunities can go hand in hand with combating climate change, supporting conservation efforts and ensuring responsible forest management. Canada's wider forest sector is proud of the role we are playing to contribute to these efforts to grow the economy and protect the environment. By working together, we can support Canada's economic recovery while ensuring we are creating a sustainable and prosperous future.

About SFI and Project Learning Tree Canada

Sustainable forests are critical to our collective future. A sustainability leader through its work in standards, conservation, community, and education, SFI works with the forest sector, brand owners, conservation groups, resource professionals, landowners, educators, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and universities. It is because of the breadth and scale of this network that SFI is able to help the government deliver on its goals.

Project Learning Tree Canada (PLT Canada), an initiative of SFI, has been an important partner in the government's COVID-19 economic recovery efforts. As part of these efforts, PLT Canada will place another 1,200 youth into high quality work experiences in communities across the country through its [Green Jobs program](#), in addition to the over 2,500 previously successful job placements it has achieved since 2018. PLT Canada offers a [mentorship program](#), [factsheets](#), [resume and cover letter review services](#), and [webinars](#) to support the career growth and essential skills development of both job seekers and employers. The organization also offers [environmental education](#) materials to help inspire the love of forests and nature, and [mental health and wellness services](#) to help participants be their best self.