



March 14, 2022

The Honourable Greg Rickford
 Minister of Indigenous Affairs
 Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry
 Whitney Block, Room 5630
 99 Wellesley St. W
 Toronto, Ontario
 M7A 1W1

Submitted via email.

Re: Ontario’s Natural Resource Users say Public Forest Road Infrastructure Key Ask for Ontario’s 2022-23 Budget

Minister Rickford,

On behalf of our organizations and members, we fully support your government’s focus on building public infrastructure. Significant investments have been made in highways, northern community infrastructure, and road networks to the Ring of Fire. In response to the increased use of forest roads, required maintenance and upgrades of critical forest road infrastructure, and inflationary pressures, we ask the provincial government to increase the Forest Access Roads Funding Program to \$100 million in the 2022-23 budget. This program is a successful public-private partnership that leverages tens of millions of dollars in private investment for essential public infrastructure, supporting thousands of jobs across Ontario.

Forest roads provide essential social, cultural, wellness, and economic opportunities for First Nations and the citizens of Ontario by providing safe and affordable access to the province’s abundance of parks, natural spaces, rivers, lakes, and forests. Users include tens of thousands of people and businesses from all regions of Ontario that participate in important sectors such as tourism, prospecting and mining, forestry and wood products manufacturing, and renewable energy. Furthermore, our forest roads support culturally and economically important activities such as camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering natural foods and guiding; pursuits that have boomed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Forest roads are necessary for all these activities to continue playing an essential role in the lives and livelihoods of First Nations, Ontario families, and visitors, particularly in remote, rural, and hard to access areas.

Forest roads are vital for public safety in northern and rural areas. Firefighters frequently use them to attack wildfires before they reach population centres. 2021 was a record fire season in Ontario, making a well-maintained and far-reaching network of forest access roads more essential than ever. Roads are also frequently used by first responders who need to provide emergency services in remote locations. In healthcare emergencies, time is of the essence, and having well-maintained public infrastructure enables first responders to save lives in First Nations and communities in rural Ontario.

We appreciate the ongoing support of this program by your government. Increasing the funding envelope to \$100 million will allow the program to keep pace with inflation, the increased use of Ontario's forests, and accelerate economic development across northern and rural Ontario. By taking this action, we can kickstart a strong post-COVID economic recovery for our sectors, increase access for First Nations who rely on forest roads, enable Ontarians to explore our beautiful outdoors, and to continue building critical infrastructure across the province.

Thank you.

Anishinabek Nation
Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek
Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities
Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association
Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
Ontario Forest Industries Association
Ontario Fur Managers Federation
Ontario Mining Association
Ontario Prospectors Association
Ontario Waterpower Association
Red Rock Indian Band
Rural Ontario Municipal Association
The Town of Hearst
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
Timmins Chamber of Commerce
Unifor
United Steelworkers

CC Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
Hon. David Piccini, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Hon. Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure
Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
Hon. Prabmeet Sarkaria, President of the Treasury Board
Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Energy
Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Quotes

“Forest access roads are an important economic driver that employs Indigenous people and supports Indigenous-owned businesses across northern Ontario. They are an investment in the future of our communities.”

– **Regional Deputy Grand Council Chief Melvin Hardy, Anishinabek Nation**

“Forest access roads are critical public infrastructure that enables investments and upgrades in our communities. A well-maintained northern road network provides access to first responders to help our people during healthcare emergencies where every minute counts. Also, having maintained access roads in place year-round is critical to our First Nation's members being able to exercise their rights to hunt, fish, trap and practice their cultural activities on the land”.

– **Chief Paul Gladu, Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek**

“Being able to get out and experience the great outdoors is one of the reasons that we love living in northern Ontario. Forest access roads allow Ontarians to explore all parts of our beautiful province and enjoy recreational activities in all seasons while providing economic development opportunities in regions of the province that need it the most.”

– Councillor Danny Whalen, President, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities

“Expanded funding for forest access roads means expanded economic development opportunities for the many communities that depend on them, including Timmins. Sectors from natural resources to tourism would experience faster growth and a stronger post-pandemic recovery with the enhanced funding, and we at the Timmins Chamber of Commerce support this vision.”

- Rob Knox, President, Timmins Chamber of Commerce

“All natural resource industries depend on a comprehensive and well-maintained road network to develop their projects and sell to the marketplace. The Ontario Mining Association fully supports the ask to enhance the Forest Access Roads Funding program to \$100 million annually.”

– Chris Hodgson, President, Ontario Mining Association

“Without road access to deposits, it would be impossible for Ontario’s prospectors to explore and develop new and exciting projects. Well-maintained public road infrastructure is essential to our industry, northern economic development, and improving the quality of life for all Ontarians.”

– Garry Clark, Executive Director, Ontario Prospectors Association

“The Ontario Waterpower Association supports actions to promote economic development in Ontario’s north. It is forecasted that waterpower generators across northern Ontario will spend \$1 billion on their existing assets in the next five years. Infrastructure programs, like the Forest Access Roads Funding Program, are essential to building and maintaining Ontario’s vast waterpower resources. “

– Paul Norris, President, Ontario Waterpower Association

“Job creation is more essential than ever as we look at a long and difficult economic recovery. Expanded support for forest access roads would create jobs across the north, including right here in Thunder Bay, and we support this call to increase the program’s funding envelope to \$100 million.”

- Charla Robinson, President, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

“Recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19 is going to be a long and difficult process for municipalities across Ontario, especially in northern and remote regions. Investing in our forest access roads will accelerate the recovery process for municipalities throughout northern Ontario and create skilled, stable jobs. Forest roads are the lifeblood of our communities.”

– Mayor Wendy Landry, President, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association

“Increased infrastructure spending is going to be an essential step in Ontario’s post-pandemic economic recovery. We’re proud to join this call for expanding financial support for the Forest Roads Access Program and looking forward to the jobs, economic development, and prosperity that it will generate.”

- Jason Lacko, Representative, United Steel Workers

“Increasing the funding envelope for forest access roads will create hundreds of good-paying jobs in municipalities across Ontario. It’s essential to construct and maintain this critical infrastructure to enable communities across Ontario to reach their full potential.”

– Mayor Robin Jones, Chair, Rural Ontario Municipalities Association

“Enhancing funding for forest access roads won’t just build critical public infrastructure across Ontario. It will support strong union jobs and careers throughout the province. This is an investment in Ontario’s recovery and the future of the northern economy.”

– **Gary Bragnalo, National Representative, Unifor**

“The Ontario government understands the importance of public infrastructure and the forest industry. Leveraging and expanding this successful private-public partnership will provide unequaled value to the people of Ontario.”

– **Ian Dunn, President & CEO, Ontario Forest Industries Association**

“Forest access roads are essential for our community. They enable our residents to access emergency services in times of crisis and to enjoy the many recreational activities that our beautiful landscape has to offer.”

– **Mayor Roger Sigouin, City of Hearst**

“Enhancing the Forest Access Roads Funding Program is an investment in critical northern infrastructure that pays huge returns for the people of Ontario. Crown forests have long been a gateway for anglers and hunters to spread out across the province and enjoy a diversity of world-class opportunities, that in turn support the economic and social wellbeing of rural and northern communities. The return on investment from fishing and hunting alone is worth it, but the broad multi-use public, community, and industry benefits make it all the more significant.”

– **Matt DeMille, Director of Policy & Programs, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters**

“Investing in the Forest Access Roads Funding Program is critical to building and maintaining existing road infrastructure. This is important to the people of Ontario and beyond. Commercial sectors depend on and require this infrastructure to be well maintained for their needs. Furthermore, these roads are critical to the enjoyment of thousands of people who access our natural resources, spend time with family and friends, and create memories that last a lifetime. In this modern-day and age, Trappers depend on this type of infrastructure to manage furbearer and predator populations which jurisdictional wildlife managers depend on to help keep our ecosystem healthy and balanced.”

– **Robin Horwath, General Manager, Ontario Fur Managers Federation**