PEI Emergency Forestry Task Force Recommendations

With respect to the mandate of the PEI Emergency Forestry Task Force to advise Government on

- The immediate needs of private woodlot owners and the forest industry;
- The capacity of PEI's forest industry to salvage the wood downed by Hurricane Fiona; and
- Immediate actions Government could implement to assist woodlot owners, non-government organizations and industry.

While the intent is that this Task Force provide immediate recommendations and advice, Government has not lost sight of the need for medium and longer-term planning, which is expected to be addressed in the coming weeks through Stage 2.

The Task Force recommends the following:

(1) Government move to acquire pre- and post-hurricane satellite imagery for the entire province and quantify the extent of the storm's impact on PEI's forests;

(2) Government move to enact an exemption to building code regulations to allow small buildings below 56.08 square metres (625 square feet) to be built with unstamped lumber. The Task Force notes this is in line with regulations in New Brunswick, and will allow wood felled by Fiona to be milled locally and used for local construction.

(3) Government move to provide chainsaw safety courses for woodlot owners, with an added focus on the types of dangerous trees resulting from Fiona, how to handle them, and when they should be avoided altogether by novice chainsaw users. Consideration should also be given to making a short video showing personal protective equipment (PPE) needed and the types of situations novice chainsaw users should avoid altogether.

(4) Government move to amend the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP) as follows:
   (a) Introduce a simplified salvage management plan template / tally sheet as a pre-requisite for access to FEP salvage incentives;
   (b) Introduce a salvage incentive to help offset the increased cost of production associated with hurricane-downed wood, as follows:
   0-25% damage or blowdown: $250/ha **IF** there are access, slope, or buffer issues (determined by forest technician)
   >25-50% damage or blowdown: $450/ha
   >50-75% damage or blowdown: $650/ha
   >75-100% damage or blowdown: $850/ha

(c) Increase the float incentive from a flat rate to a rate of $240 per machine moved.
(d) Introduce an access incentive of $250 per kilometre where appropriate (as determined by a Private Land Forest Technician) to help offset the increased costs of gaining access to salvage sites.

(5) Government move to prioritize salvage applicants under the Forest Enhancement Program to help get the most important work done first.

(6) Government move to create incentives outside the Forest Enhancement Program (FEP) to aid in forest recovery work **not** associated with a salvage harvest. This would include activities such as opening forest roads blocked by blowdowns to provide access for fire suppression, watershed groups, landowners, and others; and removing damaged and downed trees within 50 metres of wetlands or watercourses to restore access for anglers and freshwater fish. The Task Force noted the successful program in Agriculture whereby a budget allocation is made, a landowner gets a private sector quote for the work, and can apply to the program to have a percentage of the work covered.

(7) Government move to ensure a level playing field for forest contractors by (a) requiring up-to-date payment of Checkoff Fees as a pre-requisite for access to any FEP incentives or (b) waiving Checkoff Fees for all contractors.

(8) With respect to fire, Government move to:
(a) identify forest stands with high, medium and low fire risk, and contact owners of high-risk stands with information about incentives available to help lower risk;
(b) provide landowners and the general public with information about steps landowners can take to identify and lower fire risks on their properties, and incentives available to assist; and
(c) to offer forest fire suppression training to forest contractors.

(9) For immediate priority areas, Government adopt the *Interim Guidelines for Mechanical Harvesting in Fiona-damaged Buffers*, with added consideration given to allowing mechanical equipment within the buffer if the ground is frozen solid or can otherwise support it. Going forward, additional consultation with the watershed community will be needed.

(10) Government, including sections responsible for business and economic development, move to research markets for under-used species, specifically Red Pine.

(11) Government move to investigate options for addressing the shortage of labour in silvicultural and tree planting sectors, for example:
(a) options to provide silvicultural and tree planting training through Holland College, potentially with assistance from Skills PEI;

(b) options to secure seats for Prince Edward Island residents at a new forest technical program opening at the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro, or otherwise promote this as an option for Island residents;
(c) create a forest-sector employment incentive, modelled on existing incentives in the fishing and agricultural sectors (eg Farm Team Program).

The Task Force notes this list of recommendations is not intended to be final, and may need to be adapted based on needs of industry, landowners, and others going forward.

With respect to the urgent nature of the creation of the Task Force and its development of these recommendations, we look forward to Government's response to these recommendations by January 20, 2023.

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