Thank you for the opportunity to comment on “Blueprint for Success: Ontario’s Forest Sector Strategy-DRAFT”.

I support and welcome the strategy fully in objective and direction! All points are valid and need to be addressed. However, one major element, or one entire chapter is missing.

The current strategy includes well formulated plans for the PRIMARY wood industry (forest to sawmills, engineered board plants), but essentially omits almost any strategy for the SECONDARY woodworking industry (furniture and other wood products manufacturers). There is no mentioning of the TERTIARY woodworking industry (suppliers to the furniture and cabinetmaking industry - machines, hardware, paint, engineering services…)

Your chart on page 8 and 10 identifies the furniture industry (this breaks down into a dozen or more subcategories of the furniture industry - i.e. residential, office, bedroom, kitchen cabinet, architectural millwork, just to name a few…) clearly identifies them as a part of the larger forest sector.

This omission is not new. For example, the extensive MNRF website mentions the secondary industry in a minor paragraph only.

The exporting of logs and slightly processed wood only provides a fraction of the employment potential to have more value added in Ontario.

Ontario’s woodworking companies are internationally competitive, which is proven by the development of strong export to the USA and other countries.

The reason for this written submission of comment is to urge you to recognise the economic importance of the secondary and tertiary wood industries to Ontario’s and Canada’s economy.

Since 2011, some manufacturers of the secondary wood industry in southwestern Ontario have organized into a cluster organization - Bluewater Wood Alliance. The organization follows the theory of the economist Michael Porter, and follows a model very successfully practiced in Europe. Until now the BWA is one of the only true “Porterian” cluster organizations in Ontario or Canada. The organization is growing and provides help to its members. As a member-driven organization it understands the needs of the woodworking manufacturing industry. The make-up of companies within the secondary industry is on average less than 20 employees and there are thousands of companies. However, these individual companies do not have the strength nor the time to be heard as individuals. A cluster organization can channel their requirements to the government.

My recommendations to the authors of Ontario’s Forest Sector Strategy are:

Recognize and add Cluster Organizations as a practical and effective intermediate between Government and industry (recognising the challenges of dealing with a huge number of micro companies)

Allow in your strategy the cooperation between cluster organization and government agencies.

Support the growth and expansion of cluster organizations to include all areas in Ontario.

On a more practical approach: Invite cluster organizations to participate in the Advisory Board (described on page 32 of your draft). This would bring the needs and the perspective of the woodworking industry to the Advisory board.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute.

I am available for follow up questions