

BIOFIBRE OPPORTUNITIES

We have been engaged by the province to provide comments and recommendations to the Biofibre Initiative. This business case provided us with a template to weigh the significance in which the province was willing to approach policy development differently (i.e. supportive of FN involvement). To this point we have contributed to the Evaluation Criteria development process. With recent ministerial changes this process is still being developed. While this business case has provided the negotiation team and UOI with a prospect to be engaged in an emerging economic market, there are further and more advantageous opportunities yet to be realized for our member communities such as previously mentioned.

BIOFIBRE

In January 2009 the Ministry of Natural Resources announced their process to make available crown wood for new investment. Prior to this official announcement an invitation to comment and respond to the MNR's intent was initiated. The Union of Ontario Indians, forwarded their comments after inviting communities to review our submission. There was a cooperative effort by Nipissing First Nation and UOI that was forwarded as final comments to the Biofibre Policy in July 2007.

BACKGROUND

Following the initial announcement of their intent, the MNR posted a Request for Expressions of Interest. This would allow them to gauge the spectrum of project interests and to measure the involvement of First Nations cooperation. This was a key ingredient to the success and potential approval of projects.

As part of discussions during our Forestry Framework Agreement Process negotiations, an opportunity evolved that allowed the teams to elaborate on meaningful engagement pending the final stage to this policy. This resulted in meetings to discuss further with UOI on how to best communicate with member communities.

CURRENT STATUS

Since the announcement UOI has contributed to the implementation phase of the provinces ongoing Wood Supply Competitive Process. This included comments to an evaluation process for selecting submissions for the Expression of Interest for Crown Wood Supply and the Stage Two Competition.

To date UOI has submitted a number of recommendations towards this initiative. There are other opportunities that may benefit Anishinabek that include mandatory criteria and minimum thresholds in favor of Aboriginal Involvement, a joint Anishinabek Ontario outreach process that would assist in educating industry about engaging and building relationships with First Nations communities and an invited appointment to a selection committee.

A second focus group session was held on October 6, 2009 to review and build on the work started in June 2009 that will include developing the evaluation criteria and collaborate in the implementation of this project.

An announcement has not been made regarding Stage II of the Biofibre Initiative, but UOI predicts that engagement on further developments on this initiative is pending.