For immediate release

**Christmas tree growers in Nova Scotia are looking towards a bright future.**

Less than a year after the unseasonably late freeze that severely impacted Christmas tree operations in Southwestern Nova Scotia, the industry has something to celebrate.

Earlier today Hon. Keith Colwell, Nova Scotia Minister of Agriculture met with Christmas tree growers from across the province at the Seffernsville Experimental Lot in Lunenburg County to announce that the Christmas tree industry will receive $751,000 over the next three years through the Building Tomorrow Fund. This money comes to support the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia’s strategic plan for the industry.

Over the past year the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia has been working with its members to develop a strategic plan to further its mission to “support the growth, improved quality and increased profitability of the Nova Scotian Christmas Tree and Greenery Industry and ultimately its future sustainability”. Council identified five strategic priorities as the focus of its strategic plan: Industry Leadership; Productivity; Quality; Marketing; and, Research and Development.

“We simply cannot say enough to thank the Minister for his support of the Christmas tree industry in Nova Scotia, and the invaluable support that we have received from his team over the past year”, said Mike Keddy, President of the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia.

Today’s announcement by Minister Colwell represents a strategic investment of $751,000 over three years in the sector that will allow the Christmas tree industry in Nova Scotia to grow and amplify its current economic impact on the Nova Scotian economy.

“As an industry, by focusing on quality and improving our efficiencies we have the opportunity to quadruple the export value of Christmas trees grown in Nova Scotia by doubling the production of the forest grown Balsam fir for which we are well known” said Angus Bonnyman, Executive Director of the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia

The Christmas Tree and greenery industry has seen significant increases in export sales since 2016, apart from the setback of the June 2018 freeze, and the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia is working on a number of initiatives to continue to develop the sector.  Currently Nova Scotian growers have more than 15,000 acres in production of Christmas trees, with an annual harvest of more than one million Christmas trees.

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Industry Snapshot according to Statistics Canada (unless otherwise noted):

Christmas tree producers (2016) 319

Circulation of *NS Christmas Tree Journal* (Source: CTCNS) 700

Acres in production (2016) 15,269

Farm cash receipt value (2016) $15 mil

Note: information above is generated from Statistics Canada Farm Survey which does not include growers with gross sales of < $10,000, thus excluding the smaller producers. (These figures do not accurately reflect the size of the Nova Scotia Christmas tree industry.)

Approximately 90% of the trees harvested in Nova Scotia are exported out of the province, either through brokers/customers within Canada or abroad. According to Statistics Canada, of the trees exported from Nova Scotia to other countries, the largest markets for Nova Scotian grown trees are the United States (75%) and Panama (20%) with the remainder going to a number of other markets, namely within the Caribbean, but some as far as the United Arab Emirates.

The growing demand being created in the United States is a direct result of the U.S. Christmas Tree Promotion Board’s campaigns. According to the NCTA, 27.4 million trees were purchased in the U.S. in 2016, and this figure continues to grow.