



MINNESOTA FOREST INDUSTRIES

903 Medical Arts Building • 324 West Superior Street • Duluth, MN 55802 • 218-722-5013 • Fax 218-722-2065 • www.minnesotaforests.com

March 14, 2024

Rick Horton Testimony

Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee

Chair: Senator Kari Dziedzic

RE: SF3986

Chair Dziedzic and Members,

My name is Rick Horton, I am the Executive Vice President of Minnesota Forest Industries.

I am testifying in opposition to Senate File 3986.

In 1896, just two years after the Hinkley Fire burned 350,000 acres and killed 418 people, Professor Samuel Green and leaders of the forest industry realized that they needed to learn more about forest conservation, and train foresters to restore the land.

It took until 1909 for the vision to take shape. An initial purchase of 2,215 acres of unallotted tribal lands began the process. They were bought at fair market value (at the time) of the land plus the value of standing timber. Other allotted lands and settlers' lands were purchased, and several hundred acres were donated to make the vision a reality.

The Cloquet Forestry Center is currently the oldest such facility in the country, with 100 years of research studies and producing thousands of trained foresters. The beautiful sustainably-managed forests of today are a direct testament to the foresight of those leaders. But the specter of climate change now threatens society. We need to study how our forests can be better managed to absorb and store atmospheric carbon.

In 2022 the University revealed a proposal to transfer the Center to other ownership. We immediately asked to be informed and involved but we were denied. Every turn in the process has been cloaked in secrecy. This has led to great distrust within the forestry community and with the public. Even today the

University will not share an MOU between the parties detailing the proposed transfer with concerned citizens.

The state has title interest in some of the land because it was purchased using taxpayer dollars. And bonds were used on some of the buildings on the property. Given the lack of transparency on the part of the University, and the lack of a plan on how we are going to train the next generation of foresters to manage forests in the face of climate change, we ask that you defeat this bill so that the Cloquet Forestry Center can remain a world class forestry research and training facility.

But if there is to be a transfer, we remind you that the land was purchased from willing sellers, and if it is going to be transferred it should follow University policy to sell for current fair market value, with the proceeds used to develop a new world-class forestry education and research center in the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important bill.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. H. H. H.", is positioned below the text. The signature is stylized and cursive.