



July 22, 2020

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson,  
Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Cc: Jim Louter, Manager, Biotechnology Section, Environment and Climate Change Canada

**RE: Regulation of genetically engineered trees**

Dear Minister,

We are writing to express our concern over requests to release a genetically engineered (GE) American chestnut tree in Canada and/or the U.S., and to ask for information about the pertinent regulation in Canada.

Researchers at SUNY-ESF (State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry) have reportedly submitted a petition to the USDA-APHIS for determination of nonregulated status of the transgenic American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) called Darling 58, with the purpose of releasing this genetically engineered tree into the wild.

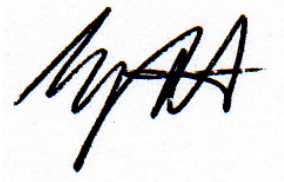
We have the following questions:

1. Is a request to approve the release of the Darling 58 transgenic American chestnut tree currently being assessed by Canadian regulatory authorities? Is such an application under discussion with regulators?
2. Which Acts and regulations govern such an application of biotechnology i.e. the release of a GE tree into the wild (versus the commercial cultivation of GE trees)?
3. If such an application for release of a GE tree into the wild is made in the U.S., is there an associated Canadian regulatory process that is triggered, in order to assess and respond to the possible risk of transboundary movement?

Please provide us with information about the regulatory authority(s) and processes in Canada that would be engaged in assessing an application for approval of Darling 58 or other GE trees into Canadian forests, and/or U.S. forests. Please also inform us if such an application has been submitted in Canada and/or the U.S.

Thank you for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Sharratt', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Lucy Sharratt  
Coordinator  
Canadian Biotechnology Action Network