



A fifth generation sawmill business certified by the Forest Stewardship Council®, J.H. Keeso & Sons Ltd. leads the industry in sustainable forest management and quality hardwood lumber. Richard Keeso tells us how his business is adapting to climate change while contributing to solutions.

QUICK FACTS

- Head office Listowel, ON
- Owners Richard & Anne Keeso
- Operating Since 1872
- Sell Across ON, QC, MI
- Planting 600 trees/year to offset carbon footprint



Richard Keeso with father Harold
Sign on the sawmill property, north of Listowel



What differentiates you from similar businesses in your industry?

We are committed to environmental and social responsibility and that's why we had our company certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. We document everything for our FSC® certification. We have our own woodlot manager to ensure forests are cut selectively to remain sustainable, so we also have a great relationship with woodlot owners in our area. We use cutting edge laser technology to ensure we get the maximum use out of every log and, rather than cutting corners to increase our production, we've focused on creating the highest quality wood products available. We also have an exceptional team here and we have a 'continental' work week, Monday to Thursday for 10 hour shifts, so this gives our employees more time off to enjoy the rest of the week.

What impact will a changing climate have on your business?

Well, we've already noticed a huge change in our winter climate. We now have only a small window of opportunity to harvest trees without damaging the forests and rutting the soil. We're now looking at new machinery that can get the job done faster while still maintaining the quality of care that Keeso's foresters take in the woodlot. Ash trees in our area have long been stressed due to our drier climate over the last few decades. The emerald ash borer is also spreading through the forests a in South western Ontario resulting in the premature death of many ash trees, as well.

What are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

We're really trying to do the right thing for the environment, and to do it cost-effectively. We even run our chainsaws on environmentally-friendly oil. The mill runs on electricity here but we heat it with a near zero carbon wood chip boiler. We've spoken out about unsustainable timber harvest standards up north and we gave our input on the Huron County tree by-law. Selective harvesting opens up space in the tree canopy so that younger trees in the understory can grow, and sequester carbon. We're also locking carbon into our lumber, so this business has a positive effect on the environment. We work with Mother Nature every day so we've learned to respect her!

