

**COALITION TO PROTECT THE CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA**

19 June 2015

Mr. Jamie McCracken, Chair
Board of Governors
The Ottawa Hospital
1053 Carling Avenue, Box 100
Ottawa, ON K1Y 4E9

Sent by email to: board@toh.on.ca

Re: Severance of Land from the Central Experimental Farm for the Civic Hospital Campus

Dear Mr. McCracken,

Our coalition is extremely concerned with the Ottawa Hospital's stated intention to receive 60 acres of the Central Experimental Farm for a new campus. We are writing to you on this matter in the hope that you will reconsider this seemingly generous offer on the part of the federal government. Specifically, I would like to highlight for you the national significance of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF), historically and in our times.

A National Historic Site that Belongs to All Canadians

As a national historic site, the CEF is a place that has been identified for its importance to all Canadians. In a very real sense, it belongs to all Canadians, coast to coast to coast, and is part of this generation's legacy to our children. It was designated as a significant cultural landscape, and as a centre for scientific advances which has benefited Canada, and continues to do so. Clearly if it is dismembered, it will lose those qualities that made it an historic site. A decision such as this one sets a dangerous precedent for the future of the CEF.

An Internationally Significant Research Institution

The CEF is a nationally significant research centre, founded in 1886 to support agricultural science in a new country. To this day, the CEF is an open-air laboratory focussed on long-term experiments in agriculture. One cannot overstate the importance of agriculture to Canada's economy, and to the well-being of each and every one of us in terms of our long term health and future welfare. Agriculture Canada's own website says that [the Central Experimental Farm] "leads Eastern Canada ... in crop development, targeting corn, soy, spring wheat, winter wheat, oats and barley. The Centre has been at the forefront of pioneering gene isolation, gene transfer, and studying gene expression in crop plants for the last 25 years..."

Other scientists have spoken out against this proposal given the significance of the Farm. Please see correspondence from Professors Ian de la Roche and Pete Smith, of the University of British Columbia and the University of Aberdeen respectively: <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/CEF>. According to Professor Pete Smith of the University of Aberdeen, "These plots are part of the science community's global scientific platform to examine long term environmental change in agricultural ecosystems. Their destruction would be a loss to the planet, not just to Canada."

We have been told that 60 acres is only 6% of the total area of the Farm. But it is over 10% of the total usable crop area. That's a significant impact. Surely the Ottawa Hospital does not want to be a party to the dismemberment of an institution dedicated to scientific research in the pursuit of better lives for Canadians, and incidentally, the planet. 2015 has been declared the International Year of Soil by the United Nations, "to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions." (from the Food and Agriculture Organisation website).

The federal government is the biggest single land owner in the national capital region. Many of these sizeable properties are unused or underused (the CEF is not one of those). We respectfully suggest that Tunney's Pasture, LeBreton Flats, the Booth Street Complex and other locations could house some or even all of the Civic's requirements.

We have been assured that the CEF is not for sale and the land is only being leased, but this is a rather specious assertion, for once removed from farmland it can never be recovered for its original purpose. Specifically, most of the area earmarked for transfer is known as Field No 1, where decades-long research is ongoing as part of an international research project.

We appeal to the Ottawa Hospital to reconsider your role in this proposal, and to return to your federal partners and look at options. Please do not be a party to this destruction.

For further information, please contact Leslie Maitland (613-792-4945) or Dr Clarke Topp (613-826-0863)

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Bull, National Trust for Canada

David Jeanes, President, Heritage Ottawa

Erwin A.J. Dreessen, PhD Co-chair, Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital

Professor Peter Smith, FSB, FRSE, Institute of Biological & Environmental Sciences, University of Aberdeen

G. Clarke Topp, PAg, PhD, Soil Physicist, Environmental Scientist

Con Campbell, CM, SOM, PhD, FAIC, FCSS, FASA, FSSSA, Soil and Environmental Service

Paul Hallett, Professor of Soil Physics, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Aberdeen

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Nikita Lopoukhine, MSc, Canadian Geographic Society Fellow, Emeritus Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, Ex Chair of the Society for Ecological Restoration, Board member of Wildlands Network, National Trustee of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

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Robert Allsopp, Fellow, Canadian Society of Landscape Architects.

Robert Norman, President, Canadian Society of Landscape Architects

Freeman Cook, Environmental Scientist, Brisbane, Australia

Cc :

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Dr. Mark Kristmanson, CEO, National Capital Commission

The Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and AgriFoods Canada gerry.ritz@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment responsible for Parks Canada Agency
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The Honourable Eric Hoskins, MD, Minister of Health and Long Term Care CSU.MOH@ontario.ca

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations soils-2015@fao.org