

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

23 November 2015

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay,
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food,
Lawrence.macaulay@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Catherine McKenna,
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
(with responsibility for Parks Canada Agency and National Historic Sites of Canada),
Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Mélanie Joly,
Minister of Canadian Heritage
(with responsibility for the National Capital Commission)
Melanie.Joly@parl.gc.ca

RE: Win-Win: Saving the Central Experimental Farm and enabling Hospital Renewal: We can do it!

Dear Ministers McKenna, MacAulay, and Joly,

The Coalition warmly congratulates you on your election to the Parliament of Canada, and congratulates you for the appointments to your Ministries. We also warmly support this Government's renewed commitment to fact-based decision-making, for both science and history are fact-based disciplines with wide-ranging benefits to all Canadians. It is for this reason that we are writing to you, and seeking your leadership on this file.

As you know, the previous government announced the severance of sixty acres of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) for the Ottawa Hospital in November 2014. We believe this decision, however generously intended, was made without an understanding of the national and international scientific and historic significance of the CEF. It was certainly done in contravention of the CEF's own Management Plan.

This land is not just any land. The fields proposed for transfer are the historically and scientifically most significant. Field No. 1 (the majority of the lands proposed for transfer) is the original section of the CEF, with records going back to 1886. The scientists conducting long term soil studies here contributed to the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in 2007 jointly with former Vice President Al Gore.

Agriculture and Science. The CEF is a nationally and internationally significant research centre. It is an open-air laboratory focussed on long-term experiments in agriculture. Studies

conducted here benefit farmers in adapting to Canada's demanding growing conditions. One cannot overestimate the importance of food security to Canadians, and the importance of the agricultural sector to the Canadian economy. The CEF has been and remains a centre of innovation and excellence in science research. Research undertaken on Field No. 1 includes the development of Marquis Wheat, which allowed stable wheat production and spurred the settlement of the Canadian prairies. The Fusarium head blight epidemic of 1981 drastically reduced the yield and quality of wheat, barley and corn crops in Eastern Canada. The first winter wheat variety that was resistant to Fusarium was bred at the CEF. As well, research here led to the complete transformation of eastern Canada's agricultural ambitions by making it possible to grow soybeans for human consumption and as animal feed. Research on soybeans started for both food-security and economic reasons in the early 1970s when the US placed an embargo on the export of soybeans. Canada responded by developing our own varieties.

The Environment and Climate Change. The CEF has been conducting long-range studies on the effect of climate change on agricultural lands. Due to the long term nature of soil studies, which tie in to data from the meteorological station located on the Farm, the research cannot be transplanted elsewhere. As we face increased pressure on agricultural lands in Canada and globally, the data gathered here are of increasing importance. The nearby construction of a large hospital would invalidate this work. Meteorological data have been collected at the CEF for over a century, and this continuity of data is important for understanding climate change.

Canada's Heritage in the National Capital. Founded in 1886 by the government of Sir John A Macdonald, the CEF's mission was to help farmers adapt to growing conditions in Canada. The successes were many, and many items that come to our table owe their excellence to the pioneering scientific achievements here. For these reasons, the CEF was designated a national historic site in 1997, as a scientific cultural landscape of national significance. There is no legislative protection for national historic sites and the federal government can only protect those NHS it owns, and then only if there is a will to do so. Because of the proposed severance, the Central Experimental Farm was identified as one of Canada's Ten Top Endangered Sites by the National Trust for Canada. The CEF is a heritage that belongs to all Canadians and is part of our legacy to generations to come. It should not be the government's to give away, but rather to steward responsibly.

Impact. Sixty acres is only 5 percent of the total land mass of the CEF but it is nearly 15 percent of the viable research lands, a significant impact on the research capacity of the CEF. Moreover, the impacts would go well beyond these sixty acres. The imposition of a large structure such as a hospital would impact drainage, wind patterns, surface heating, road systems and more. It might also curtail typical farming operations in the nearby vicinity, since one can foresee the Hospital objecting to the spraying of crops, and the spreading of fertilizers, composts and manure.

A Win-Win is possible. No one disputes that the Civic Campus of the Ottawa Hospital needs a new facility. It is reasonable and fair that all interested parties (federal, provincial, municipal governments; the Ottawa Hospital; concerned citizens and organisations) have open

consultations to search for a win-win scenario in which the Hospital gets the facilities it needs while the CEF remains an intact and important research institution and national historic site.

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.” Hospitals can be created in many places; soil cannot.

In 2017, let’s have this special place intact for all Canadians to celebrate our sesquicentennial. We respectfully ask that you, Honourable Ministers, lead us towards a win-win scenario. We would be pleased to meet and discuss this with you.

For more information, or to arrange a meeting/phone call, please contact Leslie Maitland, Heritage Ottawa at info@heritageottawa.org 613-230-8841 or 613-792-4945, or Julie Harris at jharris@contentworks.ca 613-730-4059.

Respectfully,

The Coalition to Protect the Central Experimental Farm National Historic Site of Canada

Natalie Bull, National Trust for Canada

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Friends of the Farm

Julie Dompierre, Executive Secretary, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, for distribution to the members of the board, please