



18 December 2014

Dr. Jack Kitts
President and CEO
Civic Campus
1053 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1Y 4E9
By email: jbkitts@toh.on.ca

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

Dear Dr. Kitts,

I am writing to you on this matter with the hope that I may bring a few aspects of this situation to your attention, which might persuade you to re-examine this apparently 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.

First, we certainly recognize that the Civic Hospital Campus is inadequate and needs to be replaced. I can attest from personal experience to the hours spent over the years following dots on the floor while the wonderful and compassionate staff of the Civic cared for my family in less than ideal surroundings.

But I ask you to look across the road and consider what is under threat. 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 benefit Canada. Clearly if it is chopped up, it will lose those qualities that made it an historic site. Only sixty acres we are told: it doesn't take a crystal ball to see where this is going.

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The CEF is a nationally significant research centre, founded in 1886 by Sir John A Macdonald, 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. Others can speak more authoritatively on the scientific significance of the CEF, but Agriculture Canada's own website characterises the farm as: [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..."

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. It is as though some other authority walked into one of the Civic's labs and decided to repurpose it without your leave or permission. Surely you, Dr. Kitts, as a scientist do not want to be a party to the dismemberment of an institution dedicated to scientific research in the pursuit of better lives for Canadians.

Let's look for a win-win scenario, in which the Civic Hospital gets the new facilities it needs and deserves, and the Central Experimental Farm continues to play its role as a nationally significant research institution and national historic site that benefits us all. While the federal government's offer is generous, seen within the perspective of the federal government's land holdings in the national capital region, it is the biggest single land owner, and many of these sizeable properties are unused or underused (the CEF is not one of those). Tunney's Pasture, LeBreton Flats, the Booth Street Complex and other locations could house some or even all of the Civic's requirements. Let the federal government be generous without destroying one of its hallmark research institutions.

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.

Dr. Kitts, I appeal to you as a scientist, as a Canadian, to reconsider your role in this proposal, and to return to your federal partners and look at options that work for all. Please do not be a party to this destruction.

I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Leslie Maitland, M. Mus., CAHP
President, Heritage Ottawa

Sent by email; letter to be followed by post.

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Copied to:

The Hon. John Baird, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister Responsible for the NCC

Dr. Mark Kristmanson, CEO, National Capital Commission

Alan Latourelle, CEO, Parks Canada Agency

Mayor Jim Watson

Chris Wiebe, Chair, Central Experimental Farm Advisory Committee

Natalie Bull, Executive Director, Heritage Canada National Trust