



18 December 2014

The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister Responsible for the National Capital Commission
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H7

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

Dear Sir,

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 proposal. 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.

Your offer on behalf of the Government of Canada to provide a property suitable for a new Civic Hospital Campus is generous, but please consider that what is at risk is also of great value. 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: we fear where this is going.

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. 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

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... 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. We have been assured that the CEF is not for sale and the land is only being leased, but once removed from farmland it can never be recovered for its original purpose. You can't make more farmland, but medical research can happen in many places.

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 Government of Canada'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. Please be generous without destroying our hallmark agricultural research institution.

The Central Experimental Farm was founded in 1886 under the leadership of Canada's First Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, as a place to pioneer agricultural techniques suitable to a new, young nation. Discoveries made here have made Canada a powerhouse in agriculture internationally. As the only national capital with a functioning farm in its core, the CEF helps make the City of Ottawa unique. As we approach 2017, let's look forward to opportunities to celebrate and perpetuate this amazing place in its entirety.

Yours respectfully,

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

Sent by email; letter to be followed by post.

Copied to:

Dr. Kitts, CEO of the Ottawa Hospital
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

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