



June 5, 2018

The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
Dear Minister MacAulay,

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm. In January of this year, I wrote to your colleague, Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, with respect to the December 2017 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, titled a *Report on Historical Buildings and Sites, Preserving Canada's Heritage: The Foundation for Tomorrow*.

In my letter, I indicated that the Friends welcomed this report. In particular, we were supportive of the Committee's recommendation that "the federal government introduce legislation to:

- ensure that federal actions do not adversely impact the commemorative integrity of national historic sites of Canada or the integrity of heritage sites and buildings designated by provinces and municipalities in Canada;" ... and
- "Ensure that federal actions take into consideration the heritage values of Canada's national historic places."

In her reply of February 27th, Minister McKenna wrote that she would forward her reply to your attention as the Central Experiment Farm (CEF) falls under your responsibility. The Friends are seeking to clarify your position on the issue of protecting the remaining acreage of the Central Experimental Farm, which retains status as a designated National Historic Site.

We do not wish to revisit the issue of the placement of the Civic Campus of the Ottawa Hospital on land until recently allocated to the CEF. The Friends recognize the need be good corporate citizens and the potential health benefits which will accrue to the citizens of Ottawa. But we believe the potential future impact of this decision on the grounds of the CEF needs to be stated.

The specific site chosen for the hospital will challenge the public areas that are an integral part of the history and *raison-d'être* of the Farm. Public interaction has always been part of the mandate of the Farm, and that objective is reinforced in the National Historic Site Management Plan.

The Dominion Arboretum provides many benefits to residents and visitors to the capital: removing air pollutants, reducing stress, cleaning groundwater, providing a cool retreat, reducing climate change, supporting wildlife and much more. In addition, the Arboretum provides a living historic record of trees planted on the Farm site since 1889. In fact, at our recent Annual General Meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Paul Villeneuve who is doing research of the impact of the Farm



on the quality of life in the neighbourhoods adjacent to it.

The Ornamental Gardens are of historic and natural significance to all Canadians, as explained in the FCEF publication, *Blooms: An Illustrated History of the Ornamental Gardens at Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm*. These gardens comprise unique plant collections found nowhere else in Canada. FCEF volunteers provide thousands of hours annually, under the direction of AAFC staff, demonstrating invaluable community involvement.

The first challenge to both of these areas by the intended development can be seen in the layout plan for the new hospital, including the location of parking areas. Buildings and paved surfaces will be located across Prince of Wales Drive from the Arboretum, changing both sight and sound of the area. The construction will also directly displace many trees and hedges that were planted on the northwest side as an extension of the Arboretum. It's also worth noting that while a number of Farm buildings, i.e., the Dominion Observatory complex and other heritage buildings, will be in the buffer zone between the research fields and the new construction there won't be a similar buffer zone on the east side of the development.

The second significant challenge will come from the re-design of roads and traffic management on the repurposed site. Any widening of Prince of Wales Drive to accommodate increased traffic and emergency vehicles will diminish both the Arboretum and the Ornamental Gardens. Any change to the NCC Driveway, Birch Drive or Maple Drive will have a similar impact. Both will interfere with the intended landscape design as specified in the CEF National Historic Site Management Plan.

A third and most significant threat will come from the precedent that this project will make for future development. New encroachment could come from another border of the Farm, or it could come from the hospital administration's interest in continuous improvement to its facilities.

As the Central Experimental Farm National Historic Site Management Plan states, "The overarching goal of site management is to preserve the integrity of the cultural landscape." The plan recognizes that at any point the situation is complicated by recent and proposed activities on site, which involve other agencies and other agendas, resulting in various types of public involvement. But it clearly states that the Farm must "become more self-conscious about its own history, and about its iconic value within Ottawa and within Canada."

The Friends of the Farm are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the public areas of the Farm. We are taking an active role in the Campus Engagement Group established by the Ottawa Hospital to comment on and influence the design and construction so as to minimize the damage and additional encroachment on this National Heritage Site.

**Friends of the Central
Experimental Farm**



**Les Amis de la Ferme
expérimentale centrale**

We hope in your capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada you will work to ensure the Farm is preserved for all Canadians. I look forward to your response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Dodds,

President, Friends of the Central Experimental Farm