



January 16, 2018

Minister Catherine McKenna

Minister Responsible for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and Federal Heritage
Review Office

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Dear Minister McKenna:

I am writing to you once again in my capacity as President of the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm ("Friends"). It has come to our attention that in December, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development released a Report on Historical Buildings and Sites, Preserving Canada's Heritage: The Foundation for Tomorrow. The Friends welcome this report.

In its recommendations, the report states: "The Committee recommends 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".

As you are aware, the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) was designated a National Historic Site in 1997 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Parks Canada. An Advisory Council was established in 1999 to ensure public participation in the CEF's management and to safeguard the historic site. A CEF National Historical Site Management Plan was drawn up to provide a framework to balance the CEF's dual role as a National Historic Site and as an active research centre. This Plan refers to the cultural landscape of the 400-hectare farm in the heart of the Nation's Capital. It states: "...the Central Experimental Farm has become a symbol of the central role agriculture has played in shaping the country." In addition, the CEF is many other things, including the green lungs of the capital city. It is unique in North America.

While the Friends realize it is too late to reverse the government's decision to cede acres of the CEF so that a modern hospital may be built on that site, we do want to ensure that there are no further incursions on the CEF historic site. It has come to our attention that the City of Ottawa is proposing to claim three meters of the CEF's



southern border along Baseline Road for a rapid transit route. Moreover, it is understood that a portion of the Arboretum, next to the O-Train line, will be dug up to double track that portion of the transit route, although this area will be replanted.

Following the public consultation last year by the National Capital Commission, its report commented that the future hospital site would “impact on cultural heritage due to intrusion into the boundary of the Central Experimental Farm National Historic site, proximity to the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site and the presence of heritage buildings.”

Given the possible further parcelling out of CEF lands, the Friends appeal to you, in your role of Minister responsible for the Historic Sites and Monuments Board and Federal Heritage Review Office.

Specifically, the Friends would like to protect the remaining acreage of the CEF. We wish to know how the Central Experimental Farm is incorporated into and protected under the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act, 1985*. If this is not the case, are there plans to strengthen the *National Historic Site Act*, in particular regarding the Central Experimental Farm, in the near future by your Government?

Further, the Friends seek confirmation from you that the National Capital Commission, which plays a critical role in overseeing the planning for national historical sites in the National Capital region, will be guaranteed to exercise its full authority, and at arms' length, to make decisions that will be respected and not be overturned by vested interests.

The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization members from across Canada who help to care for the Arboretum, the Ornamental Gardens and other public areas of the Central Experimental Farm, in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Over 10,000 volunteer hours annually help to maintain the Farm, to ensure the educational benefit and enjoyment of the public, and to promote the Farm's historical significance. While our particular interest is in the CEF, we are one of many groups concerned about the lack of protection for our national historic sites.

We urge you to strengthen legislation so that Canada's national historic sites are not lost. They are very vulnerable under current legislation, and we need to find ways to protect our history and our future.

We look forward to your reply to the questions above. Our hope is that a strengthened *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* will ensure that the Central Experimental Farm, its buildings, fields and gardens, will continue to be enjoyed by future generations of



Canadians. This will recognize the important role the Farm has played in the development and settlement of our country.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Dodds,

President, Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

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