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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Prime Minister:

Comments from the Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA) on the Ottawa Hospital's wish to expand on 60 acres of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa

On November 3, 2014 former Conservative MP John Baird and Ottawa Hospital President and CEO Dr. Jack Kitts unexpectedly announced that the Ottawa Hospital would be provided with land on the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa on which to build a new Civic campus. It has been reported that twelve sites in the Ottawa area were considered before settling on 60 acres on the Central Experimental Farm located south of Carling Avenue and across from the current Civic campus.

Following the federal election of October 19, 2015, this decision has been subject to reconsideration, meaning four locations are now being re-assessed by the Ottawa Hospital. They include the 60 acres located across the road from the current site; part of the same site reconfigured to include land somewhat to the east of it; the site of the former Sir John Carling Building, and the one site not on the Central Experimental Farm -- the western half of Tunney's Pasture. The *Ottawa Citizen* (March 8, 2016) has stated that the Ottawa Hospital is "gathering information about the four sites and will submit it to the federal government" by the end of March 2016.

The OIA is very concerned that three of the four sites under reconsideration are on the Central Experimental Farm. Two of them are research sites with long histories of use, and the site of the former Sir John Carling Building is apparently on a fault line. The remaining site, Tunney's Pasture, currently has buildings on it that are in use and it would take years for them to be replaced nearby before they could be torn down and a new hospital built in their place. The OIA is also concerned regarding recent statements in the press. On February 18, 2016 *Ottawa West News* reported: "I don't think we're hitting 'pause' with the plan or even stepping back," said Kitts. "We're ensuring we do our due diligence to look at the land in the Experimental Farm and determine if it's the best site." Furthermore, Dr. Kitts has also said (*Ottawa Citizen*, March 8, 2016) that the public "will not help to decide where it will go." Based on statements such as these, and the fact that only one of the sites under reconsideration is not on the Central Experimental Farm, the OIA is apprehensive that this process is simply "window dressing" -- to put a better spin on a pre-determined result -- and the Ottawa Hospital will again recommend the use of research lands on the Central Experimental Farm for the new Civic campus.

This isn't just any piece of land, however; this farmland is intensively used as an outdoor agricultural research lab. "Field number 1," for example, comprises much of the 60 acres that Dr. Kitts and Mr. Baird announced in 2014 would be the site of the new Civic campus. The *Ottawa Citizen* (on September 21, 2015) reported this is the location of a key study of "the effects of low-tilling and no tilling on carbon in soils, something that contributed to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, making Agriculture Canada scientists among joint recipients of the prize." Its loss would scuttle 24 years of accumulated knowledge from this hugely important tillage and crop rotation research program that is intended to run for many more years, would necessitate its being restarted elsewhere, and would delay, by decades, the benefits from being passed on to farmers.

Since its inception in 1886, research at the Central Experimental Farm has contributed significantly to the advancement of agricultural practices in Canada. An early example was work on the development of Marquis wheat which, a century ago, helped to open up the Canadian Prairies to successful farming. There are many other examples of innovations such as the more recent development of short season varieties of soybeans that have helped Ontario's farmers -- especially those located in the more northerly parts of the province -- as well as those in the Prairies, to add the option of soybeans to their rotations and to remain internationally competitive. The 2016 federal budget has included new investments in agricultural genomics and clean technology, as well as money to rehabilitate and modernize Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's research stations and laboratories. Unfortunately, despite a spectacular record of research, despite new dollars for agricultural research, despite having been declared a national historic site in 1998, and despite its existence as a significant cultural landscape that belongs to all Canadians, the future of the Central Experimental Farm is now at risk.

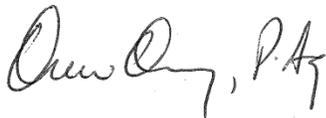
The OIA is not only concerned regarding the current plan to take 60 acres of the farm for development, but what such a precedent would also mean for the future. According to the *Ottawa Citizen* (November 14, 2015), the Ottawa Hospital has stated that the site selection criteria were to allow "flexibility for future expansion over and above what is currently planned." Furthermore, if a hospital weren't being proposed now, something else will be proposed later. Inevitably, this will inexorably eat away at the farm to the point where it would no longer be viable. Surely, the Central Experimental Farm is worth keeping intact in consideration of its substantial contributions to food security, environmental sustainability, a dynamic agricultural sector and Canada's economy!

In view of the above, the OIA calls for the following to be done:

- As called for by members of the public at the information meeting held in Ottawa on March 7, 2016, the Ottawa Hospital should expand the number of sites under reconsideration for a new Civic campus. It should also remove any sites on the Central Experimental Farm from any further consideration.
- The federal government should refuse to approve construction of a new Civic campus on the Central Experimental Farm, and should grant formal protection to all of the lands that comprise it, effectively preventing more development proposals in the future.
- In the interest of increased transparency, the public should be granted the ability to provide input on the future location of the new Civic campus.

The OIA believes it is possible to avoid pitting the future needs for health care in the centre of Ottawa against the continuance of the agricultural research needed to ensure a vibrant agricultural economy and future food security in Canada. And it is possible to satisfy the needs of both interest groups by working together.

Yours truly,



Drew Orosz, P.Ag.

President

Ontario Institute of Agrologists

For over 50 years the Ontario Institute of Agrologists (OIA) has worked to ensure not only the highest standards for accredited agrology professionals in Ontario but also to ensure support for the agricultural leaders of tomorrow and innovation in agrology research that leads to successful commercialization. OIA-registered practitioners are among the 10,000 designated Professional and Technical Agrologists in Canada who serve the agricultural industry.
