

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask.
S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226



national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IT'S NOW OR NEVER TO SAVE OUR COWS AND FARMS

KINGSTON, ONTARIO - Despite 18 months of strong public opposition from Canadians of all backgrounds and political stripes, the Conservative government will try to end the prison farms by shipping out the Frontenac Institution dairy herd this weekend. The Save Our Prison Farms national campaign is calling on citizens to stop them.

OLEX (Ontario Livestock Exchange) in Waterloo, Ontario has confirmed that the dairy herd sale, scheduled for 11 am, Tuesday, August 10, will be a live auction, rather than a video sale, as previously announced. The Minister of Public Safety, Vic Toews, has given the order to move the cattle out of Frontenac Institution and take them to Waterloo for Tuesday's sale.

“We think they will move the cattle Sunday and/or Monday,” said Dianne Dowling, Save Our Prison Farms campaign member from the National Farmers Union, Local 316. “The campaign is calling on people to come out en masse at 12 noon on Sunday, August 8, to peacefully block the shipment of the cows. We are asking the thousands who support this vital program, and all the good it represents, to re-plan their Sunday and book their Monday off work to show our government that the farms are worth saving. It’s not too late for Prime Minister Harper to listen.”

There will be options for citizens who do not want to block vehicles, such as standing with signs and banners, Dowling said.

“Everyday folks, young and old, have shown, at the peaceful July 23 blockade of the Correctional Service of Canada regional headquarters, that we are ready to halt the transport of the dairy herd using peaceful civil disobedience,” said Andrew McCann, Save Our Prison Farms campaign member from Urban Agriculture Kingston. “We have had trainings on safe practices, we have reached out to the police, we have stressed that this is a soft blockade that will only target the cattle trucks and no staff or prisoner transfers from the prison will be hindered. We are peaceful citizens acting democratically, trying to wake up a government that has stopped listening to its people on this and many other issues.”

“If this is how a minority Conservative government responds to majority Canadian opinion on this cost-effective, farm-based rehabilitative program, I wonder what they would do with a majority,” said John Williamson of the Frontenac Federation of Agriculture and a member of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign. “Do they have any respect for democracy?”

“They certainly don’t have any respect for farmers,” said Jeff Peters, Save Our Prison Farms campaign member from the Frontenac Cattlemen’s Association. “This government has insulted all farm communities in Canada by declaring farming an irrelevant training for offenders. Do they not believe that contact with nature and rural values such as self-sufficiency are the basis for rehabilitation and a safer society?”

“This campaign is a lightning rod for addressing the Conservative Party's short-sighted policies on farming, food and justice,” said McCann. “The decision to shut down this successful rehabilitation program symbolizes our government's lack of understanding of what actually makes the public safe. They fail to recognize the value of a restorative approach to justice and a sustainable, local approach to the future of farming and food.

For more information, contact:

Dianne Dowling 613-546-0869, (Sunday, cell 613-449-3266) dowling@kos.net

Andrew McCann, 613-767-4127, mccann17@yahoo.com

For background information, go to:

<http://www.saveourprisonfarms.ca> for more information.