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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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500 CITIZENS SUCCESSFULLY BLOCK PRISON FARM CATTLE TRUCKS

KINGSTON, ONT. – More than 500 citizens of all ages and political stripes peacefully blocked cattle trucks from entering the Frontenac Institution in Kingston today in an act of peaceful civil disobedience. Members of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign—which has been fighting the closure of Canada’s prison farms for more than a year-and-a-half—blockaded the institution today and refused to move despite nine arrests by City of Kingston Police and a prolonged rainstorm.

The Correctional Service of Canada has planned an auction of the Frontenac dairy herd on Tuesday, August 10th at the Ontario Livestock Exchange in Waterloo. “Corrections had planned to remove the calves and heifers today, and then ship out the actively-milked cows on Monday,” explained Dianne Dowling of the National Farmers Union. “But 500 people blocked the empty cattle trucks from entering, and they were unable to ship out any cattle today.” Visitors and employees were allowed to pass through the blockade lines and access the institution as normal.

“The blockade was a tremendous success,” said Andrew McCann of Urban Agriculture Kingston. “The citizens of Kingston and beyond held their ground today, and fought for democracy, prisoner rehabilitation, and the ability of our community to feed itself. People of all ages, from babies to great-grandparents, sat and stood together.”

During the blockade, police arrested nine participants; the youngest was a 14 year-old girl, the oldest an 87 year-old women. Most arrestees were pulled—apparently at random—from the blockade line. The arrestees have been criminally charged with mischief, and five are being held awaiting bail hearings on Monday.

The use of peaceful civil disobedience is the last step in an eighteen month campaign that has lobbied the Federal government with petitions and protests and held rallies with Canadian icons like musician Sarah Harmer and author Margaret Atwood. The campaign has been supported by farm organizations across Canada and has had unanimous supporting resolutions from city councils in Kingston and the region.

The blockers voluntarily withdrew as a group at about 6:30 pm after receiving a promise from the police commander on the scene that no cows would be moved overnight. “The police have given us their word that no cattle will be removed until Monday morning,” explained Bridget Doherty of the Sisters of Providence.

On Monday morning, citizens will block any and all loaded cattle trucks from leaving. If the cattle trucks are stopped on Monday as well, the Ontario Livestock Exchange will be unable to hold the auction scheduled for Tuesday.

Overnight, observation of Frontenac Institution will continue from the Community On Watch Station (COWS), an ongoing 24-hour vigil staffed by community volunteers. Citizens will gather again at Frontenac Institution again at 5:30 Monday morning in preparation for another day of blockades. The Save Our Prison Farms campaign has received reports that additional police forces from the OPP are being called in, and that riot gear is being distributed to Kingston Police despite the peaceful nature of the blockade.

“This campaign is a lightning rod for addressing the now-beleaguered Conservative government’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.

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For background information, please visit:

<http://saveourprisonfarms.ca/>

For live updates, please visit:

<http://twitter.com/prisonfarms>.