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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLOSURE OF PRISON FARMS A SHORT-SIGHTED MOVE, SAYS NFU

The federal government's announcement that it intends to close six prison farms operated by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is a short-sighted move, says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

In a letter to Hon. Peter Van Loan, federal Minister of Public Safety, Stewart Wells said the decision appears to be based on potential short-term financial gains from the sale of real estate. He noted a consultant's report in 2007 indicated the government could likely gain \$2 million from the sale of two prison farm facilities near Kingston, Ontario.

The CSC and Minister Van Loan claim the prison farms no longer provide employable skills training to inmates because the number of farms in Canada has declined.

Wells said this attitude by the government wrongly implies that farming does not require a considerable amount of skill and professionalism, and also suggests that farming and food production itself is an outmoded and irrelevant activity. Both suggestions are completely false.

"The government appears to have written off agriculture as a fundamental cornerstone of the Canadian economy," he stated.

Wells said rather than close the institutions and exacerbate the overcrowding and gang-related problems in the regular prison system, the CSC should expand and enhance the prison farms as a constructive alternative. Not only do the inmates gain technical and social skills from this program, the prison farms also contribute a considerable quantity of locally-grown food to the institution. The loss of this locally-sourced food will increase the financial burden on taxpayers.

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