**Suffering Eyes Project**

*“The whole earth is sanctuary”*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PRISON FARM SANCTUARY A WIN-WIN FOR KINGSTON**

**KINGSTON, ON. August 16, 2016.** City Hall was filled to capacity as over 250 community members gathered for a meeting hosted by MP Mark Gerretsen and Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale to discuss the feasibility of reopening prison farms at two Kingston penitentiaries. While opinions were shared for and against restoring prison farms, a third option was proposed to model the farms as animal sanctuaries. Franceen Neufeld and Calvin Neufeld, co-founders of the Suffering Eyes Project that supports farmed animal sanctuaries locally and internationally, presented their Prison Farm Sanctuary proposal as an ethical alternative to the conventional agribusiness model.

“What would raising animals for slaughter teach inmates?” Franceen asked. “Ironically, and tragically, it would force the suppression of empathy in those individuals who most need to be taught empathy as part of their process of rehabilitation.”

In his comments, Minister Goodale emphasized that the Liberal government’s priority is the rehabilitation of offenders through the teaching of life skills, employment skills and empathy. Their feasibility study was designed to investigate the potential of prison farms to accomplish these goals while being financially and environmentally sustainable.

“I’m convinced,” reflects Calvin Neufeld, “that the Liberal government holds it equally important that their undertakings be ethically sustainable.”

Animal welfare is a mounting public concern as awareness grows of the environmental and health impacts of the meat and dairy industries, and the ethical issues complicit in farming animals, which even in optimal circumstances necessitates forced confinement, the manipulation of sexuality, the breaking of familial bonds, and ultimately, the taking of life.

In her proposal, Franceen described how a former teacher at Joyceville Institution told her that she would hear frightened cows wailing in the prison’s abattoir. “If this was so heart-wrenching for her to hear, what was it doing to the inmates whose job it was to kill them? Or to those whose job it had been to care for them?”

The Sheriff’s Office Animal Farm in Florida was cited as an example of a highly successful and self-sustaining prison sanctuary, receiving international acclaim over the past decade for their innovative approach to rehabilitation. “The Kingston Prison Farm Sanctuary is eminently doable as a self-sustaining, rehabilitative and ethical venture,” concluded Franceen. “Considering the indomitable dedication of the Save Our Prison Farms movement, surely we can rally together to truly ‘Save the Herd,’ and to inspire inmates with an experience of kindness and rescue that leaves no room for violence. A farmed animal sanctuary is the only model that can achieve this.”

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