



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-03169**

BY: **Ms. MAY (SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS)**

DATE: **FEBRUARY 1, 2019**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE RALPH GOODALE, P.C., M.P.**

Response by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Correctional facilities

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The government is focused on providing a correctional environment conducive to inmate rehabilitation, which is also in the interest of public safety. With this objective in mind, Budget 2018 invested \$4.3 million over five years, beginning in 2018-19, to support the re-opening of penitentiary farms at Joyceville and Collins Bay institutions in Kingston, Ontario. This will provide offenders with valuable employment skills through involvement in renovation and building of necessary infrastructure, in working on the farmland, and through implementing horticulture and livestock operations in the months and years ahead. Participation in the farms will have rehabilitative value for inmates, and will provide them with transferable skills that they can use to gain employment upon release.

CSC conducted an online consultation of the Canadian public, from June 2, 2016 to August 4, 2016, regarding the feasibility of re-establishing the penitentiary farms. The objective of the online consultation was to gather views and ideas from a variety of community members and stakeholders for the future of institutional agribusiness, more particularly for the farms at Joyceville and Collins Bay penitentiaries in the Kingston area. The results revealed that the perceived benefits of institutional agribusiness were largely recognized by the online consultation respondents, including its positive impact on employment opportunities and on the use of CSC land.

In addition to the online consultation, a town hall was held in Kingston, Ontario, on August 16, 2016. A report prepared on the town hall consultation notes that, of the 300 people who attended, all, with the exception of two critics of the very notion of penitentiaries, were strong supporters of penitentiary farm based rehabilitation and employment programs, both animal and plant based. On May 11, 2017, CSC announced an advisory panel that was established to provide non-binding advice about the potential reopening of penitentiary farms at Collins Bay and Joyceville Institutions in Kingston, Ontario. The panel is comprised of seven volunteer members who engaged with CSC, including CORCAN representatives and community stakeholders. Its purpose is to assist CSC to better understand potential farm industry operations, explore new business ideas, and promote partnerships to provide vocational, on-the-job and transferable skills training for offenders while they are incarcerated, and to support their employability upon release to the community. Since the announcement in Budget 2018, CSC has been working closely with the Farm Advisory Panel, as well as other organizations and government agencies, including land management, livestock operations, and infrastructure needs.

On June 21, 2018, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness announced that the Government of Canada will be reopening penitentiary farms in Kingston, Ontario at Joyceville and Collins Bay Institutions. The new model for penitentiary farm operations at Joyceville and Collins Bay Institutions will include dairy cow and dairy goat operations, in addition to land management, horticulture, and crop production. Offenders will be involved in building and renovating necessary infrastructure, as well as working to repair and rebuild farmland to prepare for crops. The reopening of the farms represents a renewal of the penitentiary farms model that includes additional technical skills, certifications, and community partnerships. The farms will also provide on-the-job training, vocational certification, and employability skills that will support offenders in their reintegration.