

New prison farm structure is taking shape

The program, for minimum security inmates, will be run out of Joyceville Penitentiary

BY SUZANNE ATKINSON
Ontario Farmer

for the Feihe infant formula factory currently under construction here.

Five beekeeping courses have been run with each handling a full enrolment of 10 inmates per session as Correctional Services Canada gears up to open its new farm program. A farm supervisor is expected to soon be on the job, and an update to Prison Farm Co Op members says that instructors should be working this summer.

In addition renovations are being done to the existing Collins Bay barns to house young goats, young cattle and dry cows.

Plans for the Joyceville Institution barns which will house the milking cows and goats have been under review by Public Works.

The Prison Farm Co-op members were also told that plans are being made to “extend,” greenhouse and gardening operations at both institutions and “indigenous circles are being held with elders who work with inmates at both institutions, regarding growing plants important to indigenous people (eg. sage, cedar, mints).”

In addition, CORCAN, which will incorporate activities connected with the farm into other programming such as wood-working and welding, “is working with an eastern Ontario crops consultant for recommendations about matters such as soil testing, soil amendments, crop rotations, and cover crops,” says the update to the co-op.

Tender documents explained that CORCAN’s mission of the safe reintegration of offenders into Canadian society is filled in part through employment and employability skills train-

ing provided to offenders.

“Research confirms that stable employment has a direct impact on offender recidivism. Through CORCAN work, offenders are placed in pro-social environments, gain a new sense of self and identity, and learn new skills and knowledge.”

“This results in creating safer communities.”

Equipment for the harvest of hay, as well as two TMR mixers, a seeder, corn seeder, rake, cultivator, baler and wrapper plus straw and silage chopper, liquid manure spreader and lagoon pump, solid manure spreader and windrow turner are among the major purchases which have been successfully tendered and were expected to be delivered before the end of this month.

Dianne Dowling, a co-chair of the panel overseeing creation of the program, said the farm properties which cover more than 1,500 acres between them, offer myriad opportunities to the inmates.

“And they’re open to talking about them,” she says of the CORCAN staff.

They are also working with St. Lawrence College and Queen’s University and she says “a lot of things could happen.”

Dowling said, significant for her has been the way in which the community is engaged in watching the program grow.

“Whenever they’re out in the fields or doing anything the public can see, they pull their cars over, or sit on the verandahs and watch,” she says.

“It’s indicative of the commitment people have to the farm and their interest and being happy to see what’s happening.”

Kingston - Tractors and field equipment have been purchased, tenders for the purchase of upwards of 800 doe-ling goats are being evaluated, and the new farm prison farm program manager is in place.

Correctional Service Canada’s main prison farm program will be operated out of Joyceville Penitentiary for minimum security inmates, says Chris Staley.

In February tenders for 12 pieces of farm equipment closed with more than \$845,000 shared among four machinery companies located in Brockville, Belleville, and Trent Hills according to documents on the Government of Canada Buyandsell website.

In addition, the Pen Farm Co Op, which purchased some cows at the dispersal of the original herd, is hoping that the 32 Holsteins it now owns, will return to the program.

It’s the latest chapter in the Prison Farm Program saga which saw the previous Conservative government infuriate the community by closing the program saying that it lost \$3 million annually and did not teach skills to inmates which were of value when they emerged from incarceration.

Staley said that milk from the farm’s goats will be the major livestock enterprise at the farm. The milk is destined

Federal budget a win for Canada’s seniors

CARP, Canada’s largest advocacy organization for older adults, is applauding the federal government for investing in the financial security of seniors in the budget.

“CARP has been calling for significant changes to safeguard Canadians as we age. The government has listened,” said Laura Tamblyn Watts, CARP’s Chief Public Policy Officer. “CARP applauds the federal government for taking decisive action in reducing the

GIS claw-back, increasing federal pension protections, supporting deferred annuities for seniors, a new EI caregiving benefit and housing supports for low income seniors.”

“We also are very pleased to see some funding for a National Dementia Strategy, increases to the New Horizons for Seniors Program and automatic enrolment in CPP for adults over 70. Investments in digital connections and municipalities will also reduce social

isolation and improve aging in place.”

Last October, CARP released its national policy platform, The FACES of Canada’s Seniors. It calls on the federal government and all parties to commit to specific, measurable improvements in five key areas that matter most to our members.

The five areas for action are: Financial Security, Abuse Prevention, Caregiving and Housing Supports, Exceptional Healthcare and Social Inclusion.

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