

MARGARET ATWOOD TO JOIN PRISON FARM MARCH

Save the Prison Farms action plan to be posted on CSC's door

KINGSTON, ONTARIO – On Sunday, June 6, Margaret Atwood will join citizens of all ages and political stripes for a march to the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Ontario headquarters. Once there, they will post their action plan for saving and revitalizing Canada's six prison farms on the door.

"Sixteen months of public events, letters, petitions, delegations, and parliamentary motions have gathered almost unanimous support across the country for Canada's prison farms," said Dianne Dowling, National Farmers Union Local 316 President. "Yet the federal government is plowing ahead with its wrong-headed plan to shut down the prison farms."

"Heritage dairy herds, which provide milk for inmates in at least three provinces are slated for dispersal," added Dowling. "As one of our supporters has said, dispersing the herd is like wiping out an entire extended family." The first sale is scheduled for Kingston's Frontenac Institution during the week of June 21.

"By marching on CSC headquarters on June 6, Canadians will be sending a clear message to our government," said Andrew McCann, of Urban Agriculture Kingston. "And that message is -- you have to stop ignoring the will of the majority."

Margaret Atwood, one of Canada's most articulate and visionary champions of environmental issues, is joining the Save Our Prison Farm Campaign to take it to a new level.

"At a time when world attention is focusing on looming food shortages linked to climate change, and when countries such as England are re-organizing to provide more food self-sufficiency, the government of Canada is making exactly the wrong move," explained Atwood.

"It is also sending a clear signal to individual farmers all across Canada that it does not respect what they do. These prison farms reflect Canadian values. Most Canadians would rather have prisons produce skilled inmates than repeat offenders – and they are increasingly supporting a vision of a future in which communities contribute to their own food supply."

"We should not take away from offenders the very thing citizens are trying to rebuild in communities across Canada," Atwood said.

A one-time resident farm owner, Atwood was co-founder of the Meadowlark Organic Farm on Pelee Island in Lake Erie, and, among many other books, authored [Alias Grace](#) – a novel set in the 1800s in Kingston Penitentiary.

The June 6 rally will begin at 1:30 pm at Sydenham Street United Church in Kingston. Other speakers include Sister Pauline Lally, General Superior of the Sisters of Providence, John Leeman, former inmate and prison farm employee, and farmer Jeff Peters of the National Farmers Union. The march from the church to CSC headquarters will begin about 3 pm.

All are welcome to participate in this free event.

See www.saveourprisonfarms.ca and www.saveourfarms.ca, sponsored by the Union of Solicitor General Employees (USGE/PSAC) for more details.

Media inquiries:

Dianne Dowling 613-546-0869 or dowling@kos.net

Andrew McCann, 613-767-4127 or mccann17@yahoo.com

Bridget Doherty, 613-544-4525, ext 145, bridget.doherty@providence.ca