



PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has put the kibosh on a proposal to relocate The Ottawa Hospital's Civic campus to the Experimental Farm, shown in the left of the photo, just across the street from the Civic.

Not on our Experimental Farm, Dr. Kitts

Historical designation trumps CEO's musings on relocating hospital

BY KATIE DAUBS

Any plan to relocate The Ottawa Hospital's Civic campus to the Experimental Farm has been quashed by the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the custodians of the federal property.

Comparing it to opening a hotel on Parliament Hill, Michel Falardeau said it's not something the department would consider for the national historic site.

On Tuesday, Dr. Jack Kitts, the CEO and president of The Ottawa Hospital, said the Civic campus will need to relocate to maintain its position as a pre-eminent Canadian hospital. He pointed to the Experimental Farm across the street as an option — but stressed it was one of many and that the move is decades away.

The Ottawa Hospital said it is still too early to determine how

much space it will need for its relocation. The Civic campus takes up a city block bounded by Carling Avenue, Parkdale Avenue, Ruskin Road and Melrose Avenue.

Mr. Falardeau, who is the director of real property and building operations at the agriculture department, said it's not the first time someone has cast their eyes on the agricultural oasis at the city's centre. Comparing it to New York's Central Park, he called it prime real estate that developers "dream about getting their hands on."

But he said every square centimetre of the Experimental Farm is covered by its historic status, which designates the area as a cultural landscape.

He added that the farm is allowed to evolve for scientific purposes. Anything that fits into the farm's larger plan, like a new greenhouse or research centre — has to be approved by the National Capital Commission.

If the Civic campus relocation was viable, a proposal would go to the experimental farm's advisory council.

"In this situation, it's very clear it would change the nature of the farm," he said. "They would reject it."

David Flemming, the president of Heritage Ottawa, said people worked hard to get the historic designation so incursions like this could be avoided.

"Even though the hospital is a worthy cause and we could use more hospitals, it would change the whole nature of that side of Carling (Avenue)," he said.

River Ward Councillor Maria McRae said although Dr. Kitts' statement was measured, she couldn't believe it when she read it in the paper.

"There is no way that I would ever support a move like that," she said.

"Many people across Eastern Ontario cherish that farm," she added, calling it a piece of "Canadiana."

Ottawa is the only capital city in the world with a working farm in its boundaries. And although it doesn't make an impact on the city's skyline, an urban planning expert said that's precisely the point.

John Meligrana, a professor

at Queen's University, said those involved should do everything possible to look for alternate locations. "All of the cities are looking more and more the same," he said. "Why not preserve the things that make your city unique?"

The Experimental Farm was established in 1886. It is used as a research facility, with fields of experimental crops, livestock and various types of flora and fauna. There is also an arboretum, a museum, and the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on site.

On Monday, the farm will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its designation as a national historic site.

And although it's not any closer to finding a location for the Civic, The Ottawa Hospital Foundation did have a spot of bright news yesterday — its Legacy Campaign raised more than \$108 million from community donors to improve patient care in the region. The donations are being matched by government and corporate donors for a grand total of \$384 million.