

## NEWS



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# Town to fight prison farm closure 🚗

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The Sackville Tribune Post

As the federal government gets set to shut down Westmorland Institution's prison farm, Sackville town council is putting its support behind keeping it in operation.

Coun. John Higham said last week that the decision seems to be based on data the government gathered two years ago in a report that showed the inmates are not getting the skills required for 2007.

"This is no longer a valid argument," insisted Higham, who noted that the world's energy and food production sectors are both rising industries again.

"It's ludicrous. We all now have a vested interest in sustainability and production of local food . . . and I think this gives the inmates a real trade."

Higham recommended town officials write a letter of support to sustain the inmate training facility in Dorchester and forward it to the local MP as well as the federal Minister of Public Safety.

Coun. Margaret Tusz-King agreed with her fellow councillor and said she believes many farmers in the area find it difficult to find workers on a regular basis and could benefit from a skilled workforce.

"I think it speaks to a lack of vision from our government," she said.

The federal government announced last week that it intends to close six prison farms across the country operated by Correctional Services Canada, claiming that the facilities no longer provide employable skills training to inmates because of the decline in the number of farms across the country. The prison farms will be phased out over the next two years.

The decision follows a 2007 task force report, prepared by a blue-ribbon panel for then-public safety minister Stockwell Day, which concluded the government could pocket \$2 million from the sale of prison farm property in Ontario alone.

Westmorland's prison farm provides occupational training and social skills for inmates, as well as contributing a considerable quantity of food for use by the institution and the local community.

Mayor Pat Estabrooks said she will also jump on board to fight the federal government's decision.

"These are good basic skills you might be teaching somebody that we really need at this moment."

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