



The Coalition Against Proposed Prisons launches Kemptonville Prison Watch initiative

New initiative calls on the Municipality of North Grenville to prevent the Ford government's demolition by neglect of the former Kemptonville Agriculture College farm buildings and arena where the province wants to build a prison

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



19 May 2026 (Kemptonville, Ontario | unceded and unsundered Algonquin Anishinaabe Territory) – The Coalition Against Proposed Prisons (CAPP) began as a grassroots community effort to stop a 235-bed prison the Ford government announced it would build on the grounds of the former Kemptonville Agricultural College (KAC) farm in August 2020, without prior consultation with the municipality or its residents. Last year, CAPP expanded its fight through the launch of the #NOPE | No Ontario Prison Expansion campaign, with the aim of enacting a province-wide prison construction moratorium, which has been endorsed by over 80 organizations to date. Alongside its provincial campaign, CAPP is also returning to its roots with the launch of the new Kemptonville Prison Watch (KPW) initiative. KPW aims to monitor developments and compliance with relevant laws and bylaws regarding the planned Kemptonville prison. This includes holding governments to account for violations of the municipality's Official Plan, zoning bylaws and other regulations prior to and, if the prison moves ahead, during the construction process to save farmland. Should the facility open, KPW will monitor violations of the constitutional and human rights of imprisoned people.

At this stage, KPW is monitoring the state of the former KAC farm property and farm buildings provincial government officials committed to preserving to the degree possible so that they could be used by the Municipality of North Grenville and its residents. Many residents have repeatedly expressed concerns over the loss of prime agricultural land and heritage farm buildings that will be destroyed by the province's proposed prison. Having observed farm building doors and windows being left open or broken in addition to other evidence of the site being left to fall into disrepair, KPW is calling upon the municipality to enforce structural maintenance, cleanliness and yard maintenance by-laws to ensure that the farmlands and heritage buildings – which were a fixture in the community for nearly a century before the college closed in 2014 – aren't demolished by neglect, so that they can be used by future generations of North Grenvillians.

Founding member of CAPP and Kemptonville resident Victor Lachance states: "The province is neglecting the heritage farm buildings on the proposed prison site that it said could be made available to the municipality. If the Ministry of the Solicitor General wants to be our neighbour and build a prison while preserving as many of heritage farm buildings as possible to allow for their use by the community as they promised, they should abide by the municipality's by-laws dealing with vacant buildings and lands, pest prevention, the fire code, yard and lawn maintenance, and their structural integrity". He continues: "It's equally important that the municipality enforce its by-laws and do what it can to preserve the site if it wants its "Local Green" initiative involving the use of surplus lands and heritage farm buildings to become a reality, with or without the Kemptonville prison being built".

CAPP member and University of Ottawa Professor Justin Piché, an expert on prison construction and an advocate for alternatives to incarceration, observes: "In the wake of comments made by Solicitor General Kerzner where he stated that they're "looking at how we can optimize the space, the size of it within the footprint of land that we have" at the KAC farm, the new Kemptonville Prison Watch initiative will be critical in local and regional efforts to save farmland and stop what sounds like a looming mega-prison". He adds: "While some public officials have tried to downplay the Minister's words, at best they were a trial balloon to see if anyone would notice or care if a bigger prison beyond the first planned 235-bed one would be built or at worst were an indicator that the Ford government once again made a decision about the project without consulting the municipality and its residents".

New KPW member and local resident Dodi Pitman explains why she's joined the initiative, stating: "From the beginning, the provincial government has run roughshod over our community, announcing a prison without consultation and now destroying a heritage farm in our town. I joined Kemptonville Prison Watch because I don't trust them to keep their promise to save as many as the farm buildings as possible to allow for their use by the community". She concludes: "Anyone and everyone in Kemptonville and North Grenville can participate in the KPW community project, but for now the key player is the municipality who needs to monitor compliance with and the enforcement of its bylaws at the former KAC farm to the benefit of the entire community".

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