



Local group demands release of municipal by-law inspection of the former Kemptville Agricultural College farm where the Ford government plans to build a prison

Town residents are concerned that heritage farm buildings are being demolished by neglect despite a previous commitment by the province to preserve parts of the site for municipal use

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

8 September 2026 (Kemptville, Ontario | unceded and unsundered Algonquin Anishinaabe Territory) – Concerns about decaying heritage buildings and serious safety issues at the former Kemptville Agricultural College farm have led local residents to fight for better protection of the site, including filing a by-law complaint with the town. However, the municipality is keeping quiet about any steps they may have taken in response, a decision which has left residents fuming.

Residents gathered for a rally at the site on July 7 organized by Kemptville Prison Watch (KPW) and the Coalition Against Proposed Prisons (CAPP). The event raised awareness about what they're calling the "demolition by neglect" of the heritage farm buildings at the site where the Ford government plans to build a prison. After the rally, residents registered a formal complaint with North Grenville By-Law Services, calling for an investigation into potential municipal structural maintenance, fire code, pest control, cleanliness and yard maintenance by-law infractions at the provincially owned site. The municipality has confirmed via email that "[w]e have finished out investigation into the matter and are currently working with the property owner to have the necessary work completed". However, the municipality has refused to disclose its by-law investigation findings or remedies to the complainant or the public, citing "privacy and confidentiality requirements". KPW is demanding that the Municipality of North Grenville reverse this decision and has filed a freedom of information request with the town to obtain these records it asserts ought to be made public.

KPW member and by-law complainant Victor Lachance expresses his frustration over the municipality's refusal to disclose the results of its investigation, stating: "As the town resident who made the by-law complaint, I was bewildered, albeit not surprised, that the municipality would hide behind so-called privacy and confidentiality concerns to avoid the disclosure of its inspection that, if made public, would surely embarrass the provincial government". In response to the municipality's assertion shared via email that "information obtained during an investigation, including inspection findings, records, and any enforcement actions that may or may not be taken, cannot generally be disclosed, as doing so may involve the personal information of other individuals or information related to an ongoing law enforcement matter", Lachance asserts: "Given the public nature of the complaint and the public interest in the future of the site, the by-law inspection isn't a private matter. This is a public matter, which demands public disclosure not more secrecy, opacity, and obfuscation, to justify the continued lack of transparency on this file by both the province and the municipality".

Former Kemptville resident, Carleton University postdoctoral fellow and prison expert, and KPW member Laura Beach adds: "The province's continued neglect of the former Kemptville Agricultural College farm – where both my father and grandfather worked, contributing to the town's long legacy as a hub of agricultural research, innovation, and activity – is nothing short of devastating. The Ford government promised to preserve these heritage buildings and to grant the municipality access to surplus lands, but the buildings are being left to fall apart and now they're saying there's no surplus land. Meanwhile, they're plowing ahead with the expensive and environmentally destructive plan of paving over agricultural land and floodplain at a time of growing food insecurity and in an age of climate catastrophe – instead of investing more in evidence-based solutions to improving public safety, including community infrastructure, services, and supports like emergency and affordable housing". Beach concludes: "If the disclosure of this by-law investigation is being held back due to an 'ongoing law enforcement matter', the local Ontario Provincial Police detachment should go on the record and explain what they're investigating and whether they consider that the site, which the province has allowed to fall into disrepair, is now a threat to public safety. The public has a right to know".

Launched in May 2026, Kemptville Prison Watch continues to monitor developments and compliance with relevant laws and by-laws regarding the planned Kemptville prison. Comprised of residents from Kemptville and neighbouring communities, the group is continuing its work to hold governments to account for violations of the municipality's official plan, zoning by-laws and other regulations prior to and, if the prison moves ahead, during the construction process to save farmland. Should the facility open, they will monitor violations of the constitutional and human rights of imprisoned people.

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