

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New report shows environmental impacts of Ford and Clark’s prison plan for Kemptville while local residents vow to keep up their fight to stop it to save farmland**

**October 9, 2024 (Kemptville)** – A new report released today by a research team based at the University of Ottawa has raised concerns about the environmental impacts associated with the Ford government’s plan to build a new 235-bed provincial prison in Kemptville, which was announced by Ontario Premier Doug Ford and local MPP Steve Clark in August 2020. According to the report that is based on an analysis of development feasibility assessments and other studies of the site, the prison’s construction would not only result in the loss of class 2 prime agricultural land and farm buildings on the grounds of the former Kemptville Agricultural College, situated on unceded and unsurrendered Algonquin Anishnaabe Territory, but would also damage Barnes Creek, which is part of the Rideau River watershed and is slated for diversion under the plan. The report also documents several potential harms to at-risk species of fish, bats, birds, turtles and plants. Based on these findings, the researchers recommend that the province abandon its Kemptville prison plan to ensure the preservation of prime agricultural land, farm buildings, floodplain, Barnes Creek, and vegetation on the site for existing and future generations of people and animals.

Reflecting on the significance of the report’s findings, local Kemptville resident and Coalition Against the Proposed Prison (CAPP) member Victor Lachance states: “We’ve been campaigning to stop this ill-conceived prison plan imposed on us from Queen’s Park for over four years and learned a lot about the negative impacts of prisons. As this new report makes clear, there are serious ramifications to paving over farmland and floodplain, and redirecting a creek in an age of climate catastrophe and food insecurity”. He adds: “Like the parcels of land that were targeted for removal from the Greenbelt, the Kemptville prison site was selected outside the province’s original search area, without public consultation, and with serious environmental implications. After the Greenbelt scandal, we’re left wondering whether Premier Ford and disgraced Minister Clark learned anything. If not, they can and should change their minds. Several neighbours I’ve spoken to are all saying the same thing – we must and we will keep up the fight to save farmland. Committed to the struggle we’re exploring new ways to stop the Kemptville prison”.

Professor Justin Piché from the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa adds: “In four years, the Ford government hasn’t advanced this project that they should’ve never announced in the first place if they care at all about enhancing community well-being and safety. The evidence is clear – prisons are costly and ineffective. Thanks to the research conducted by graduate students in my socio-politics of incarceration course, it’s also clear that the harm of this project would also extend to nature”. He concludes: “The process for public-private-partnership consortiums to qualify for this half-billion-dollar mistake hasn’t started. Contracts haven’t been drawn-up, let alone signed. Shovels aren’t yet in the ground. There’s still an opportunity for the Ford government to do the right thing. They can abandon the Kemptville prison plan today and save farmland that can be used to help address food insecurity on Algonquin Territory and eastern Ontario. They can build communities now, not cages years from now. They can instead invest millions more in supportive housing, education, employment programs, income supports, mental health and health care, along with other measures that’ll make us safer in a much shorter period than a prison now slated to open in 2031 that won’t make us safer in the long-term”.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS (English and French)**

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