

An Open Letter to the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural
Affairs Regarding the Former Kemptville College Farmlands

Friday, April 8, 2022

Via email: minister.omafra@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Thompson:

Thank you for your recent reply to my letters dated December 13, 2021, and February 24, 2022, in which I called on you to say no to the transfer of the former Kemptville College farm property from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SolGen). The transfer of this land is intended for the sole purpose of paving over acres of publicly owned heritage farmland and the destruction of numerous farm buildings in order to build a 235-bed provincial prison. This prime farmland and serviceable barns and buildings have already cost millions of dollars to the taxpayers and should be preserved as the valuable agricultural resources that they are.

I am extremely disappointed with your statement, “I am unable to assist you”. The Agriculture Research Institute of Ontario, which is under your purview, has title to the property in question and a mandate to protect farmland. Your reference to the transfer being “substantially completed” is an opaque statement that does not diminish your capacity and obligation to do the right thing.

I know you have heard from many other groups and individuals asking you not to authorize the transfer, including the National Farmers Union (NFU) – Ontario, Canadian Organic Growers, and a group of food scholars from across Canada. The Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, Just Food (Ottawa) and Sustain Ontario have also joined the call. Over 290 people have signed on to an email zap sending you the same message.

You know that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and NFU-Ontario, as well as numerous other farm organizations, are calling for protection of all farmlands, which are presently being lost at a rate of around 175 acres/day (according to OFA). This is becoming more crucial as we need more food sovereignty and security in these uncertain times.

This farm that is slated for transfer could go a long way to increase local food production and associated jobs in North Grenville, as a community small farm business incubator and hub. The available buildings are essential infrastructure that do not exist elsewhere on the Kemptville campus lands. A perfect marriage exists between the base for a farmland bank and barns and outbuildings available to carry out animal, fruit, or vegetable production. Its wanton destruction is unwarranted, unnecessary, and a total waste of resources already paid for by taxpayers.

I respectfully urge you to act now to stop the transfer and begin the process for meaningful consultation to ensure the preservation of these heritage farmlands for generations to come.

Best regards,

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On behalf of the Coalition Against the Proposed Prison

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