

Delegation to North Grenville Municipal Council, Tuesday, June 22, 2021

Presented by Kirk Albert (Jail Opposition Group) and Colleen Lynas (Coalition Against the Proposed Prison)

Colleen Lynas

Thank you. Secrecy and a lack of transparency - words best used to describe the provincial government's behaviour surrounding the proposed Kemptville prison. Our delegation will include information received through a November 2020 access to information request related to the selection of Kemptville as the chosen site. We will also be addressing council's recent statement regarding the prison and the letter from Deborah Richardson, Deputy Solicitor General that preceded it.

The full access to information release package will be posted on CAPP's website - [cappkemptville.ca](http://cappkemptville.ca) – immediately following this presentation.

'For us, transparency is always key throughout this process'. So stated Ali Veshkini Associate Deputy Minister with the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SolGen) at the October 30, 2020, stakeholders meeting regarding the prison; a commitment reiterated at the November 26<sup>th</sup> public session. The results of the access to information request reveal otherwise.

10 pages of visible content were provided. The remaining 135 pages related to the request were withheld. Even the small amount released reveals concerning information, and critical facts that SolGen failed to provide to the community.

'We have probably looked at over 100 sites' – a SolGen quote from the stakeholders meeting. At the later public session that number had ballooned to 130. However, the released documents reference the assessment of only 38, with six, and elsewhere four, referenced as shortlisted. There is minimal to no information regarding the other sites, shortlisted or otherwise.

We do learn that properties removed from contention failed to meet some of the same selection criteria Kemptville fails to meet or "only partially" meets, including:

- Municipal servicing
- "Natural heritage constraints and hazards with respect to the watercourse on the east perimeter and the woodlot on the southwest corner"
- Lack of public transit – Many have argued that the lack of transit is a factor that should have precluded Kemptville from consideration; yet SolGen and frankly our council dismissed those concerns.

Regarding public transit, a perplexing statement is found in one of the documents, "there is access to public transit from Kemptville to Ottawa with the municipality looking to expand this

service for the local community”. The same document reads, “IO [Infrastructure Ontario], along with the ministry, will need to work with the municipality to investigate and determine the feasibility of the extension of services/transit”. Did SolGen mistakenly think we have a public transit system? Did the province and the municipality have conversations about transit?

Where information is provided on shortlisted sites, Kemptville is shown as the only one that fails to meet the “preferred distance of less than 40 kms from the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC)”. Comments related to the distance, supports speculation that Kemptville may eventually replace the OCDC. Consider the following, “although this exceeds the ministry’s criteria of a preferred distance ... the ministry analyzed current staffing home locations, and the data ... demonstrates the majority of current OCDC staff live within the 40 km boundary to the proposed Kemptville property”. Documents also confirm plans to replace the OCDC dating back to 2017 and site searches for the “proposed Ottawa Correctional Complex”.

Selection criteria included room for expansion something SolGen failed to acknowledge when asked directly at the stakeholders meeting. “The parcel, at 178 acres, meets the ministry’s size constraints with potential future expansion if necessary”. We need to ask ourselves, just how big could this prison eventually become?

The answer to the increasingly perplexing question of why Kemptville was chosen, may lie in the scores of redacted pages. We know that Steve Clark failed to advise and consult his constituents even though the documents reveal that SolGen acted to “formally place the property on hold and remove [it] from circulation” on September 26, 2019, almost a full year prior to the announcement. As a cabinet minister and our local MPP, it is unfathomable that he did not know the plans leading up to and following that date.

### Kirk Albert

Regarding this evening, we note the staff report on the March 23 special council meeting is on tonight’s agenda. From our perspective, it does not reflect with accuracy the range and depth of opposition to the prison conveyed by the 12 individuals who spoke that night and we encourage people to seek out the video on the municipality’s YouTube channel.

In preparation for our joint delegation, questions for both the municipality and SolGen were submitted to you. Council’s statement and the government’s letter did touch on some of the questions asked but failed to provide the detail and clarity sought. Further, a number of our questions remain unanswered, including our request to Mayor Peckford to formally correct the record on erroneous comments that the prison would bring 500 new jobs to the region. A few additional comments on the municipality’s June 18<sup>th</sup> statement and the accompanying letter from the provincial government:

There is nothing revelatory found in those two documents. Council’s hope to convince the province to situate the prison as far back as possible from the road in an effort to minimize its visual impact has long been known. It is all a bit of magical thinking – that somehow its

placement will solve the significant negative impacts this prison will bring. We are ever more concerned about the potential environmental impacts, including prison placement on or near the floodplain, given the new information regarding existing heritage constraints and hazards. The completion of an environmental assessment, now reportedly scheduled for the fall, is a base requirement. Talk of consulting the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority rings hollow considering the steps the provincial government has taken to limit the powers and authority of provincial conservation authorities.

**Policing costs:** The province has recently cancelled all contracts with municipalities for the recovery of policing costs for correctional institutions. For North Grenville, this action will result in the potential for substantially higher costs to be borne by local taxpayers once the prison is operational. We urge council to provide residents with a full accounting of the projected costs and how the municipality plans to fund them.

**Servicing/infrastructure costs:** The Deputy Solicitor General's letter confirms what we heard previously – that the province will be responsible for all servicing/infrastructure costs associated with the new prison. It is in writing, but the language appears to speak to one-time and not ongoing costs. Time will tell but we remain skeptical given the history of secrecy revealed to us. And then there is the question of commitments made, commitments broken. Please ask yourselves is it similar to the commitment made to municipalities that they would be reimbursed for policing costs associated with their respective correctional facilities?

**Access to surplus land:** We know that SolGen routinely offers municipalities access to the land surrounding prisons for such things as sports fields and greenhouses. It was in their pitch at the public session. We anticipate they will likely accommodate your request in some form, but we certainly do not see it as a gift to this community. Whether the land you can access lies in the shadow of the prison or on the section of land south of College Road, we now know SolGen will ensure there is still room for prison expansion.

Thank you