

April 27, 2022

Dear Editor,

While I'm not a member of CAPP or JOG, I think there's more to the Municipality's farmland meeting and David Shanahan's editorial than meets the eye. There's an obvious reason why organisations like CAPP and JOG spend some of their time on trying to hold the Municipal Council accountable. It's because their actions or inactions create a circle game of silence, misinformation and, lately, gre-

enwashing the proposed prison. This creates a significant barrier for residents to hold the province accountable for their proposed plan. All they need to do is say that the Municipality supports it, so it's all good. But it isn't.

In her attempt to greenwash the proposed jail, our Mayor complains about the limits of municipal power when faced with an undemocratic provincial government, which of course includes our MPP Steve Clark, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones, and Minister of Agriculture Lisa Thompson. But that's saying that Council is powerless on this issue, which doesn't quite ring true.

No one forced the Mayor and Council to jump on the prison bandwagon before they knew all the facts. No one forced the Mayor and Council to trot out the province's misleading talking points, especially the one about jobs, which many businesses and residents still believe to this day. No one stopped them from clearly and frequently disabusing businesses and residents of this false information. No one stopped them from trying to save the entire farmside property and joining the call for Minister Thompson to not transfer the land to the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

No one stopped them from submitting Freedom of Information requests to get information that the province promised us (remember that they said "transparency is key for us"), instead of leaving it to residents like me to do so, and to pay for the costs. No one is stopping them from insisting that Indigenous rights be respected rather than insulted with a proposed prison on their unceded and unsundered land, which they know to be the case. No one, unless it's our MPP, is stopping them from opposing the prison plan until they can tell taxpayers that they will absolutely not have to pay for policing costs. Let's not forget that the Mayor and Council said they would fight against the jail if taxpayers were on the hook for any costs.

Mayor and Council are not powerless. On top of that, they claim that it's a done deal, when we know the Ford government has backtracked on many of their plans. Who is there, if not the Municipality, to fight for the residents' right to the information that residents like me haven't been able to get, not even through my Freedom of Information request? If they say that they can't get it either, why are they supporting the jail? Isn't that enough to represent the interest of all residents, whether they are

for, against, or indifferent, and, as CAPP and JOG recommend, call for a moratorium until the province holds true consultations with the residents of North Grenville?

To square the circle requires all sides to first rely on the facts. I know from my experience that CAPP has provided me through their public information sessions and website ample information to evaluate the prison project and easily conclude that it's a boondoggle. The cost of building it and then operating it, the cost to taxpayers, the destruction of farm buildings and farmland, the fact we don't have the infrastructure and services to accommodate a prison, and the fact that we don't even need a new prison, is all there to be found. For years now, a number of critics have said a better bail system would eliminate the need for more prisons. So I don't think that the Municipality is powerless, or blameless. They didn't cause the problem, but they haven't been part of the solution to save the farmland.

*Lawrence Beltzoc
Kemptville*