

An Open Letter to the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Minister Thompson, where are you?

February 18, 2022

Via email: minister.omafra@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Thompson:

In an open letter sent to you over two months ago on Dec. 13, 2021, the Coalition Against the Proposed Prison called on you to not transfer the former Kemptville College farm property from your Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the Ministry of the Solicitor General who plans to build a provincial prison on the site. Should the land transfer and the proposed prison proceed, it will result in the destruction of heritage farmland – including prime agricultural land – numerous farm buildings, and all the promise and opportunity the entire 182-acre property offers. This is a major concern for numerous farmers and residents of this region and beyond, yet we have not received even an acknowledgement of this letter from you.

Our initial letter has since been endorsed by two key organizations, the National Farmers Union – Ontario and Just Food, both strong supporters of local food systems, as well as academics affiliated with the former Kemptville College and the University of Guelph. You have also heard from the hundreds of individuals who have participated in our Email Zap calling on you to do the right thing.

Considering that agricultural land is a precious non-renewable resource, a strong stand is needed by your ministry to support Ontario's farmland, agricultural heritage, and the rich agricultural potential of this property, by preserving the site as an agricultural resource for generations to come. This should go without saying since protection of farmland is a mandate of your ministry. In a time of food insecurity, supply chain interruptions, and climate catastrophe, the consensus from scientists is that it becomes even more important to save, not pave over farmland.

Why have we not heard back from you on such an important issue? It's not too late to start a process of meaningful consultation with key stakeholders, with the goal of preserving the entire site as the vital agricultural resource that it is.

Sincerely,

Marie-Therese Voutsinos, M.Sc. Agriculture
Coalition Against the Proposed Prison