

January 24, 2022

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister  
Ontario Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs  
11th Floor, 77 Grenville Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1B3

Dear Minister Thompson,

It has come to the attention of the National Farmers Union – Ontario (NFU-O) that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is considering the transfer of the former Kemptville College farm property to the Ministry of the Solicitor General (SolGen) for the purposes of a new “Eastern Ontario Correctional Complex.”

As an accredited general farm organization with thousands of members, including in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, the NFU-O is requesting that you, as the Minister responsible, not authorize the proposed land transfer for the construction of a prison in Kemptville, Ontario.

The 182-acre Kemptville College Farm property includes prime agricultural land, comprised of mainly class 2 and 3 soils. This land has a century-long history of farming, education and agrotourism, and has served as an agricultural hub for the Eastern Ontario farming community.

“Maintaining the former Kemptville College farm property as publicly-owned farmland is the way forward,” says Don Ciparis, NFU-O president. “It has the potential to be a practical example of local food production, a means to address food insecurity, and proof that the Ontario government cares about sustainability and the protection of arable land in a time of climate crisis.”

The NFU-O strongly believes the government should preserve this farmland—including the agricultural and heritage buildings on site—for future generations. We are also concerned that prison construction will have negative environmental impacts and negligible economic benefit to residents in the area.

Additionally, numerous prison experts—from the [Criminalization and Punishment Education Project](#) to the [Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#)—have presented a number of compelling, well-documented reasons against increasing Ontario’s prison capacity:

- Sentencing rates have been on the decline for decades.
- The majority of prisoners currently at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC) are pretrial and have yet to be sentenced.
- Larger jails only exacerbate inequality and are key institutions that uphold systemic discrimination against the racialized, the poor, and those with mental health issues and/or drug dependency.
- New and larger prisons are incredibly expensive and a waste of taxpayer dollars.
- Imprisonment does not work to make our communities safer or deter law-breaking.

“The future of Eastern Ontario is in supporting sustainable agriculture, not prisons,” says Max Hansgen, an Ottawa-area farmer and NFU-O Director. “Instead of prisons, Ontario should be investing in community-based alternatives that address poverty and the root causes of criminal activity.”

We trust that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will make the right decision.

Sincerely,



Krista Long  
Executive Director, National Farmers Union – Ontario