

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Rally in opposition to the proposed Kemptville Prison to be held tomorrow
at MPP Steve Clark's Constituency Office in Brockville**

Kemptville, ON – October 14, 2021

Opponents to the proposed plan to build a new provincial prison on farmland in Kemptville, Ontario are taking their message to the constituency office of their MPP Steve Clark at noon on Friday, October 15, 2021. Clark is the local MPP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, a riding that includes the town of Kemptville, approximately 60 km south of Parliament Hill. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Clark's name has become synonymous with his controversial use of Minister's Zoning Orders that bypass local decision making and planning.

The Ford government wants to build the prison, currently referred to as the "Eastern Ontario Correctional Complex" on land that was formally part of the Kemptville Agricultural College established in 1917. The decision was made behind closed doors and without any consultation with the local government – the Municipality of North Grenville – and the residents of the community. The University of Guelph took over the campus in 1997, but in 2014 announced its plan to close the school the next year. In 2018, the municipality acquired approximately 650 of the more than 800 total acres and created the Kemptville Campus Education and Community Centre. The farm portion of the campus, including its existing buildings, remained under provincial ownership, and is earmarked for the prison, despite municipal interest in acquiring the land.

"Based on media reports, we know that MPP Clark was aware of the municipality's interest in acquiring the remaining lands and reintegrating them into the campus almost a full year prior to the provincial government's surprise prison announcement, a fact that makes his failure to disclose the plan, and advocate on the part of our local government and this community at the cabinet table, that much more striking", states Colleen Lynas with the Coalition Against the Proposed Prison (CAPP).

CAPP together with the Jail Opposition Group (JOG) are two local grassroots organizations opposing the Queen's Park imposed Kemptville prison plan who are organizing the Brockville rally tomorrow. Kirk Albert from JOG explains a few of the reasons for staging the event:

"We want to remind MPP Clark that the residents of Kemptville and the surrounding municipality of North Grenville have a voice, and that our collective voice has been communicating legitimate concerns about all aspects of this proposed prison for over a year now, to which he has distanced himself from. We want to remind him and the Ford Government that as constituents, we are the people that will be directly impacted by this plan, and that continuing to by-pass public consultation and public input is not only dismissive and undemocratic, but it is also not what we expect from our own MPP and other elected officials". He asserts, "It is time for the government to admit that mistakes have been made. They need to reconsider their proposed plan rather than heedlessly continuing to impose the prison on a rural town where the government's own documents indicate that the location doesn't meet their requirements."

When the Kemptville prison was announced by the Ford government, the Premier and MPP Clark claimed the project would bring jobs to the town. "After the announcement, we looked into these claims and consulted leading prison experts", explains Victor Lachance of CAPP. "The touted economic benefits for our community have been proven false and all signs point to an increase in property taxes, and undue strain on our local infrastructure, healthcare, and other resources", he adds. "Reasons for opposition are wide-ranging and include not only local concerns, but broader economic, social justice and environmental issues, and disbelief in the undemocratic and arrogant behaviour of office holders in Queen's Park including our MPP Steve Clark", concludes Lachance.

For more information or to arrange media interviews in English or French contact:

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