

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 – 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 26th 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

Good evening. We noted on tonight's agenda that the staff report regarding the March 23rd special council meeting is listed. From our perspective, the report 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 watch the video on the municipality's YouTube channel to get a full breadth of the concerns tabled that evening.

In preparation for our joint delegation this evening, questions for both the municipality and SolGen were submitted to you. Council's statement and SolGen's accompanying letter issued this past Monday, did touch on some of the questions asked, but again 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, local jobs.

A few additional comments about Monday's statement from Mayor and council and SolGen's letter:

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 County 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 now even 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 that they have already identified as problematic referring to it as quote "the watercourse on the east perimeter and the woodlot on the southwest corner". Unquote.

The completion of an environmental assessment, now reportedly scheduled for this fall, is a base requirement.

Reference to consulting the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority unfortunately provides little solace considering the steps that the provincial government has taken to limit the powers of provincial conservation authorities.

On the topic of 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.

Remember, we were told that there would be ZERO cost burden, to the taxpayer!

Regarding Servicing & infrastructure costs:

SolGen's letter from earlier this week states what we had heard previously – that the province will take on cost for servicing and infrastructure associated with the new prison.

The language appears to speak to one-time and not ongoing costs.

We remain skeptical of ongoing cost coverage in this regard, given the history of downloading provincial costs to municipalities in this province and the lack of evidence to prove otherwise.

And then there is the question of commitments made & commitments broken.

Please ask yourselves, is coverage of Servicing and Infrastructure cost similar to the commitment made to provincial municipalities to reimburse in perpetuity, policing costs associated with their respective correctional facilities?

I think our Mayor and Council might want to consult with the Mayor of Penetanguishene about the Ministries commitments made and then broken, to him and their municipality.

Regarding Access to surplus land:

Again, we already 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 for North Grenville and it has been in all their previous pitches.

Why do you think this is a necessary part of their routine?

We anticipate they will likely accommodate your request in some form, but we certainly do not see it as a win for this community.

Whether the land you seek access to, lies in the shadow of the prison or on the section of land slightly adjacent, we now know SolGen will ensure there is still room for prison expansion, they made that clear in their documentation.

Finally, I want to encourage our mayor and council members and **ALL** North Grenville residents to review the 10 pages of documents that the Ministry provided to us 7 months after it was requested.

Those 10 pages paint a picture which bend rules to satisfy their needs, contradict fundamental statements made to us by the Ministry and indicate a clear lack of truth and transparency – really the two key things we've asked for since the announcement.

Imagine what else we would learn if they felt we.....the residents.....the voters.....the taxpayers were important enough to release the other 135 pages of documentation, that they withheld.

Thank you