



# KAREN MCCRIMMON

MPP | Députée Kanata-Carleton

I understand that a recent announcement was made that a Kanata South location was being considered for the potential establishment of a welcoming centre for asylum seekers/refugees coming to Canada.

I spoke with Councillors Curry and Hubley and then with Mayor Sutcliffe. The councillors and I all stressed to the Mayor that more open information and consultation was needed, especially in the affected neighbourhoods. Everyone agreed.

Some clarifications are needed here.

- 1 **LIE:** A welcome centre will lead to an increase in local crime. This is **NOT** true. There has been no increase in crime in the vicinity of Ottawa's other temporary sites for hosting newcomers. This **LIE** has been shared in order to make people afraid. There is **no need to be afraid**.
- 2 **LIE:** The site will be used for other unhoused populations. This is **NOT** true. The City has applied to the Federal Government for funding for a welcoming centre to receive newcomers and prepare them for the next stage in their Canadian experience. A welcoming centre will free up space in our homeless shelter system. It has been the only place for newcomers to go.
- 3 **LIE:** A sprung shelter is a tent. This is **NOT** true. A sprung shelter is a prefabricated quick assembly building. It is **NOT** a tent and **people who suggest that this is a tent are wilfully trying to confuse and scare people**.
- 4 A very comprehensive site search was conducted by City staff. Other neighbourhoods in Ottawa have surrendered their community and recreation centres to help newcomers. The City is trying to avoid that in the future.
- 5 The Kanata site **is a secondary potential site**. It is not funded and requires zoning by-law changes. This is a much longer-term process, with **formalized opportunities for information-sharing and consultation**.

**Teaching point:**

I have been informed that **many of the initial instigators of this negative campaign had few or non-existent ties to our community. They specifically, selectively, and heavily targeted members of ethnic diasporas with their disinformation to create anger and fear.** These tactics or behaviours are commonly referred to as 'Agitprop'. "Agitation propaganda" is, and was, widely used in the Soviet Union to control populations. **Fear and anger manipulate behaviours and opinions.** It has also been adopted as a *modus operandi* by right-wing extremists in many parts of the world, **including Canada.** There are definitely discussions that need to be had around this issue, but we need to be aware that **our fears and anger can be used as weapons against us as a community.** This prevents the development of real solutions to any one of the very real challenges facing us today.

Why would someone **intentionally:**

- cause fear, anger, and conflict in our communities?
- provoke the dehumanization of one group of newcomers against another?

I don't have an answer for you, but we all need to question. **We must always ask WHY!**

As with all misinformation campaigns, someone has their own agenda and objectives, and they don't care who gets hurt.

Although this is strictly a City issue, I vigorously oppose any initiative that does not include the provision of comprehensive information and a robust consultation program.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out. Together we can make a difference!

Sincerely,

Karen McCrimmon

**MPP for Kanata-Carleton**