

Caledon to form new Illegal Land Use Task Force

Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell and Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa appointed to task force

By ZACHARY ROMAN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Caledon will soon have a new task force to deal with illegal land use.

Caledon first implemented an illegal land use task force in 2021, but is now implementing a new governance model and new terms of reference for a new illegal land use task force.

This month, a call will go out to the community seeking residents to join the task force. In September, the Town will appoint community representatives to sit on the task force.

At Caledon Council's June 4 General cCmmittee meeting, Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell and Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa were appointed to participate in the new illegal land use task force.

At the meeting, Councillors unanimously voted in favour of implementing the new task force.

Accompanying the recommendation to implement a new illegal land use task force was a staff report from Joel Assaly, a Municipal Law Enforcement analyst for the Town of Caledon.

The report noted Caledon has seen a concerning rise in illegal parking and storage of tractor-trailers and other commercial vehicles. Since the first task force was implemented, Town staff have investigated well over 200 truck depots, completed 61 prosecutions, and are still working on many more active files.

However, staff have experienced many challenges, according to Assaly's report.

?Despite enforcement efforts, the illegal expansion of truck depots and other forms of illegal land uses persist, exacerbating the problem,? reads the report. ?Violations such as fill importation occur even when by-law officers are present on-site, indicating a blatant disregard for regulations? existing fine amounts are insufficient to deter illegal activities, as they are viewed merely as a ?cost of doing business' by offenders.?

The report also notes legal proceedings can be lengthy and that there are delays in court. Even more issues are detailed in the report.

?Some properties change ownership after receiving violation notices, complicating enforcement efforts and allowing offenders to evade accountability?? it reads. ?It is often challenging to track down property owners, particularly when they are corporations or located outside of Ontario, delaying the service of summonses? operations are sometimes owned by corporations, with no clear individual in charge, further complicating enforcement efforts and accountability measures.?

To help address these challenges, one of the main goals of the new illegal land use task force will be to identify interagency collaboration opportunities and advocate to higher levels of government.

The task force will liaise with the OPP, Region of Peel, conservation authorities, and more.

The new task force will begin meeting this fall, and provide its first update to Caledon Council in the first quarter of 2025.