

Caledon touts success of invasive species program

Town fighting against forest pests and invasive plants

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Town of Caledon has been working to fight against invasive species.

On August 20, Town Communications Staff issued a media release detailing the Town's efforts to fight against invasive species.

The release said in the spring of 2021, Caledon encountered a wave of the invasive spongy moth caterpillars. It was a significant wave and as the caterpillars ate tree leaves, it impacted the health of Caledon's tree population.

That year, Caledon Council approved and established an invasive species program aimed at managing the impacts of recurring spongy moth outbreaks. The program has since expanded to target more invasive species and prepare the town to defend against any potential outbreaks in the future.

As part of the Town's invasive species program, a new position was created at the Town: Invasive Species Coordinator.

Jody Elchyshyn is Caledon's invasive species coordinator and oversees Caledon's invasive species program.

"Spongy moth was the main focus early on and we worked with several departments, including Service Caledon and Communications, to develop a strong campaign to help mitigate the impact spongy moth made in our community," said Elchyshyn.

Throughout 2022, a number of tactics were used by the Town to fight against the spongy moth: the handing out of burlap bands to help protect trees; ground spraying and biopesticide injections on Town-owned trees; sticky barrier bands installed on Town-owned trees; egg mass scraping; development of a tracking form and interactive map for residents to report spongy moths in various life stages; a social media campaign; and collaboration with agencies like the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC).

The Town said thanks to these efforts, reports of spongy moths reduced significantly in 2023.

According to the Town, in the past two years Caledon has shifted its focus to fighting against other forest pests and invasive plants.

Early detection monitoring has been initiated to watch for invasive forest pests that have not yet been seen in Caledon such as hemlock woolly adelgid and spotted lanternfly. Early detection work has also begun to monitor for species like invasive aphids.

The Town has also been updating its inventory of urban trees to prepare for potential future infestations ? over 6,000 trees have been inventoried so far.

In 2023, the Town worked with the TRCA and CVC to survey the Caledon Trailway for invasive plants. This year, the Town started managing invasive plants on the trailway.

"Successful receipt of funding from the Invasive Species Action Fund has aided 2024 plant management, which allowed Caledon to expand management efforts," said the Town. "Caledon continues to work along with the conservation authorities, focusing on managing invasive phragmites, Japanese knotweed and oriental bittersweet on the Caledon Trailway."

Caledon has also begun looking for invasive species along Town-owned roads and parklands.

To date, over 1,600 occurrences of prioritized invasive plant species have been inventoried on Town property, in addition to the 2,000-plus occurrences mapped by the conservation authorities on the Caledon Trailway, said the Town.

Jeremy Johnson, Caledon's Manager of Parks and Forestry, said he's proud of Caledon's invasive species program.

Our invasive species program team has done an excellent job of addressing threats and pivoting to manage emerging threats as well, he said. Invasive species is an evolving field, and it's important that the Town continue to increase its efforts both to manage these threats, but to also inform residents of those efforts and ways they can manage threats on their properties.

The Town of Caledon has numerous resources for those looking to learn more about invasive species on its website, caledon.ca.