

## It's 866-544-8332 ? Mayor wants people to know Graffiti Hotline

By Bill Rea

The Town now has a hotline for reporting acts of graffiti.

It can be accessed by calling 866-544-8332.

The new line was officially unveiled recently by Mayor Marolyn Morrison, accompanied by Town councillors and other local officials. It went live Oct. 15, and will be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

The mayor said council approved the pilot project earlier this year, on the advice of the Town's Graffiti Advisory Committee. It consisted of seven members from the community and four councillors who worked with town staff to look into graffiti reduction programs that have been successful in other areas, and come up with the best plan for Caledon.

‘A vital element in combatting graffiti crime is knowing when and where it is occurring in the community,’ said Councillor and Committee Chair Patti Foley. ‘The hotline provides us with a reporting and tracking system that can be used easily by local residents.’

The hotline is an integral part of a framework developed by the committee after evaluating and researching similar graffiti eradication plans from around the world. The Caledon plan focuses on three key principles: Prevention of graffiti vandalism through the anticipation, recognition and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of some action to reduce the likelihood the crime will occur; management of graffiti vandalism, including reporting, assessing and removing it; and enforcement of applicable bylaws and laws under the Criminal Code.

‘Graffiti vandalism is a crime and falls within the Criminal Code of Canada,’ said committee member and retired OPP officer Bob Patterson. ‘It is considered ‘mischief’ and therefore any person who commits graffiti vandalism is guilty of an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada and may be sentenced to prison.’

At the discretion of the courts, offenders may be required to undertake community work such as cleaning up tagging and graffiti.

‘Graffiti enforcement action should not unnecessarily bring youth into the formal criminal justice system,’ said committee member and OPP Constable Clyde Vivian. ‘Collaboration among agencies is a key to effective enforcement; community work, where graffiti offenders may actually remove graffiti vandalism from communities, may be an appropriate penalty for many offenders.’

Vivian has been working with youth in Caledon to combat and remove graffiti through the OPP's mentoring arts program in local schools.

‘It is vital that everyone in the community work together to tackle graffiti vandalism,’ said Councillor Rob Mezzapelli. ‘Effective crime reduction campaigns involve partnerships focused on community engagement, ownership and action.’

Morrison also said an important element of reducing graffiti is making it easy for people to report it. The ideal solution, she added, is to have a single contact line, and then to make sure people know about it.

‘We have to get this number out there,’ she declared.

Morrison said calls to this hotline will go directly to both Caledon OPP and to the Town's Regulatory Services and Enforcement Divisions.



Mayor Marolyn Morrison recently officially unveiled the number of the Town's new Graffiti Hotline, accompanied by Councillors Nick deBoer, Patti Foley and Rob Mezzapelli, Caledon OPP Constable Clyde Vivian, Peel District School Board Trustee Stan Cameron, Councillors Richard Paterak and Doug Beffort, retired OPP sergeant Bob Patterson and Councillor Gord McClure. Photo by Bill Rea