

Town recruiting for Illegal Land Use Task Force

Interested residents must apply by July 21

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Caledon residents interested in stopping illegal land use in Town may want to join a new task force.

On June 27, the Town of Caledon announced it was seeking residents interested in joining its new Illegal Land Use Task Force (ILUTF).

Applications for the task force must be made by July 21 and can be made on the Town's website, caledon.ca.

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

Caledon's Commissioner of Community and Human sSrvices Catherine McLean said she's heard loud and clear that illegal land use is an important issue for Caledon residents.

'We look forward to building a task force that will work collaboratively with our community partners to improve the quality of life in Caledon,' said McLean.

Jack Hunjan, Caledon's Director of Municipal Law Enforcement, said Caledon has investigated hundreds of properties across Caledon and that the ILUTF is the next step in addressing illegal land use.

'The Task Force will play an important role in furthering enforcement by advancing community education, interagency collaboration and advocacy with higher levels of government,' said Hunjan.

The decision to create a new ILUTF was made at Caledon Council's June 4 General Committee meeting, where Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell and Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa were appointed to participate in the task force.

A staff report from Joel Assaly, a Municipal Law Enforcement Analyst for the Town of Caledon, was presented at the meeting. It said Caledon has seen a worrying rise in illegal parking and storage of tractor-trailers and other commercial vehicles.

'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.'

As Caledon faces many challenges with illegal land use, the task force will be working to advocate to higher levels of government and looking to collaborate with other agencies to help with enforcement.