



*Annette Groves*  
*Mayor*

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July 3<sup>rd</sup> , 2024

Attorney General Doug Downey  
Ministry of the Attorney General  
McMurtry-Scott Building, 11th Floor, 720 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9  
[Doug.Downey@ontario.ca](mailto:Doug.Downey@ontario.ca)

**RE: Provincial action needed to address growing illegal land use resulting in public safety risks, costly infrastructure damage, environmental harm and social disruption**

Dear Attorney General Downey,

By way of this letter, **I am requesting a meeting with you to discuss provincial legal, policy and funding tools needed to effectively address illegal land use, in coordination with longstanding municipal efforts.** Illegal land use is a growing issue causing long-term environmental and infrastructure damage, risks to public safety, and disruption to residential communities, both in Caledon and across Ontario.

The Town of Caledon has invested heavily to find and investigate illegal truck depots and educate operators. These efforts have led to prosecutions and financial penalties within the confines of municipal powers granted under the *Planning Act* and *Municipal Act* for unauthorized land use and violation of municipal by-laws respectively.

Despite municipal enforcement efforts, illegal truck depots are expanding with defiance, where many operators consider legal fees and municipal fines a cost of doing business. Perceptions of impunity for illegal land use have important consequences on broad provincial efforts to plan and govern its lands. This concerning trend and gap in jurisdictional authority and capacity point to a need for provincial intervention, in which I am eager to discuss further with you.

Factors contributing to non-compliance include:

- Fine amounts being insufficient for deterrence relative to profit;
- Offenders circumventing violation notices by converting property ownership to avoid or delay prosecution, which creates uncertainty about who is responsible for the illegal operations and makes it more challenging to locate the beneficial owner (especially when dealing with corporations based outside of Ontario);

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**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF CALEDON**

6311 Old Church Road, Caledon East, Caledon, ON, Canada L7C 1J6  
T. 905.584.2272 | 1.888.225.3366 | F. 905.584.1444 | [www.caledon.ca](http://www.caledon.ca) | [annette.groves@caledon.ca](mailto:annette.groves@caledon.ca)

- Lengthy legal proceedings in POA courts often spanning several years, in part due to lack of judicial resources, and sometimes meaning charges must be withdrawn for delay.

Recognizing your government's interest in ensuring public safety and order, I think you will find of relevant importance the issues that growing illegal land use presents for the province as a whole:

- A number of municipalities are experiencing a rise in the illegal parking and storage of tractor-trailers and other commercial vehicles.
- Since 2021, the Town of Caledon has received over 300 related complaints from residents and stakeholders regarding traffic safety concerns, damage to roads and other infrastructure, environmental harm, and excessive noise and light pollution in residential communities.
- Growing trends in Ontario show a blatant disregard for land use rules, which has important consequences to provincial efforts to govern land in a way that supports public safety, economic productivity, housing affordability, public health and environmental protection.
- Legal and sustainable trucking operations are critical, as the industry plays an important role in supplying the daily needs of Ontarians and contribute significantly to GDP.

While my Council and Town of Caledon staff remain committed to finding innovative solutions and exercising all available avenues within municipal authority, complex matters such as these require collaboration among orders of government. Particularly when our shared residents are voicing concerns.

To this end, I was pleased to discuss illegal land use with Premier Ford and Minister Calandra at last month's Small Urban GTHA Mayors Meeting, where mayors were united in relaying the importance of municipal ability to enforce zoning by-laws and maintain land use planning integrity. Their ensuing commitment to provincial resources and exploring additional municipal penalties was a reassuring step towards a determined and coordinated cross-government intervention.

With that said, harsher municipal fines or establishing administrative monetary penalties alone are not expected to ensure broad compliance. I am keen to work with you on further solutions as they pertain to your purview as Attorney General and hope we can meet at your earliest availability to discuss this timely issue before it escalates to a less manageable state.

Sincerely,



Annette Groves  
Mayor of Caledon

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Cc:

Minister Paul Calandra of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Solicitor General Michael Kerzner

Mayor Steve Pellegrini, King and Chair of the Small Urban GTHA Mayors  
Mayor Patrick Brown, Brampton  
Mayor Steven Del Duca, Vaughan  
Mayor Carolyn Parrish, Mississauga  
Mayor Ann Lawlor, Halton Hills

Nathan Hyde, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Caledon

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