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Hamilton

Year-long Six Nations protest forces cancellation of major development in Caledonia, Ont.

Notices were sent to homebuyers earlier this week, deposits being returned in full

Desmond Brown, Samantha Craggs · CBC News · Posted: Jul 02, 2021 1:13 PM EDT | Last Updated: July 2, 2021

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Demonstrators stopped the McKenzie Meadows development on July 19, 2020, and have been occupying the site since, renaming it 1492 Land Back Lane. (Dan Taekema/CBC)

A year-long occupation by Six Nations land defenders has forced the cancellation of a major housing project in Caledonia, Ont., the developer said Friday.

William Liske, vice-president and chief legal officer for Losani Homes of Stoney Creek, said they have received no response to requests for help or intervention. This week, they sent letters to homebuyers saying any deposits would be returned in full.

Foxgate Developments — a joint venture between Losani Homes and Ballantry Homes — had hoped to build more than 200 residences, a mix of townhouses and detached homes in the McKenzie housing development.

But work at the site came to a halt more than a year ago after land activists claimed the land was unceded *Haudenosaunee* territory, and renamed it 1492 Land Back Lane. The Six Nations-led group has been occupying the site since then.

- [**Six Nations elected chief stresses unity, reiterates call for moratorium on development**](#)

"Notices were sent out to homebuyers earlier this week noting that the sale agreements had been frustrated for a number of reasons, which include the passage of time [one year], the evolution of the project from a temporary camp to a site with more permanent buildings, the lack of any conformity with or enforcement of the court's orders, and the failure of either government [provincial or federal] to even respond to our requests for help or intervention," Liske said in an email to CBC Hamilton.

"Deposits are being returned in full."

'A bit of excitement in the air'

Land Back Lane spokesperson Skyler Williams said the group is happy about the turn of events.

"I think that there's a bit of excitement in the air today," Williams told CBC News.

"I think this is a big statement to Indigenous communities and to all of Turtle Island ... these wins are attainable. I think we have an opportunity to be able to say to the feds and the province that if our community says no to these developments, whether that's massive housing developments or resource destruction — if we say no to that and we stand behind it, these wins are possible.

"So, it is in their best interest to start a process that [finds solutions] in a peaceful way, that doesn't include cops with guns," he said.

Williams said standing for their territory has been a generational struggle.

"This is something that my parents fought before me and their parents before them," he said.

"If we give up any ground now it removes that argument to even be able to be made by our children. And so for us, this is something that's going to be ongoing, not just for my generation, but for generations to come, until we can see some real change from the federal government to be able to push in the right direction here."

- [**VIDEO Six Nations traditional government wants moratorium on development of Haldimand Tract**](#)

Ken Hewitt, mayor of Haldimand County, said the cancellation is disappointing. The developers and the county consulted with Six Nations-elected council, he said, and "obviously we supported the planning and the process."

The elected council is separate from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council (HCCC), which has [called for a moratorium on development](#) in the Haldimand Tract. The tract was granted to Six Nations of the Grand River in 1784 for allying with the British during the American Revolution. It covers roughly 384,451 hectares along Ontario's Grand River, and includes municipalities such as Waterloo, Brantford and Caledonia.

Homeowners in the middle

The elected council has also [backed the call for a moratorium](#), saying it would be irresponsible to continue development until the issues are resolved.

Hewitt said homeowners "are the innocent victims in this, and it's unfortunate."

- [The head of the statue of Egerton Ryerson now on a spike at Land Back Lane in Caledonia, Ont.](#)

He said a lot of the buyers are younger families, and a mix of area residents and people from out of town. The homes were going for between \$300,000 and \$600,000, which Hewitt called an attractive price point for people. It would be hard to find a new home for \$300,000 now, he said.

"Obviously, those options aren't there anymore."

Haldimand County is frustrated with provincial police, who it says are not enforcing a court injunction for the Land Back Lane inhabitants to vacate the property.

What it says about the land title system

Hewitt said he's concerned about what this new development means for the legal system, the land title system and the formal consultation process in place.

"There's another layer to that, and that's our federal government, who's chosen to abandon the opportunities in the last number of years to resolve these ongoing issues," he said. "And here we are."

At an April news conference, Deyohowe:to (Roger Silversmith), Cayuga Snipe chief with the HCCC, said it's "time to end the injustice."

"We want the land that is ours. We are not interested in approving fraudulent dispossessions of the past," he said.

"We are not interested in selling land."

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