

# Man accused of killing wife faces second murder charge

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Staff Writer

A Woodbridge man charged in the stabbing death of his estranged wife has been charged with the murder of his childhood friend, which occurred just hours later.

Michael James Luciano, 38, faces a first-degree murder charge in the strangulation death of James Cooper, also 38, of Peterborough.

Cooper was found dead in Luciano's car, outside his niece's home in Egmondville Jan. 23.

Hours earlier, the partially clad body of Colleen Richardson Luciano, 33, was found by a cleaner in a North York dumpster behind the Academy of Learning on Keele Street.

Police believe she was stabbed to death in the basement apartment she shared with her husband on Brandy

Crescent in Vaughan and dumped sometime later.

Two days after the gruesome discovery, Luciano was charged with second-degree murder by York Regional Police.

He was also questioned at length by the Ontario Provincial Police after Cooper's body was discovered but not charged, as initial autopsy results failed to reveal the cause of death.

When further forensic testing concluded Cooper died of asphyxiation, first-degree murder charges were laid, said Ontario Provincial Police Det.-Insp. Don Birell.

Birell was reluctant to comment about motive.

"That is something we would prefer to not get into," he said.

"We are in the middle of the investigation and there are still a lot of people to interview.

"The last thing we want is to taint any of those potential witnesses."

Luciano and Cooper had been friends for years, and that friendship continued after Luciano's marriage a decade ago.

Both the OPP and York Regional Police are continuing their joint investigation into these murders.

Luciano appeared in Newmarket Provincial Court Thursday and was remanded in custody until March 17.

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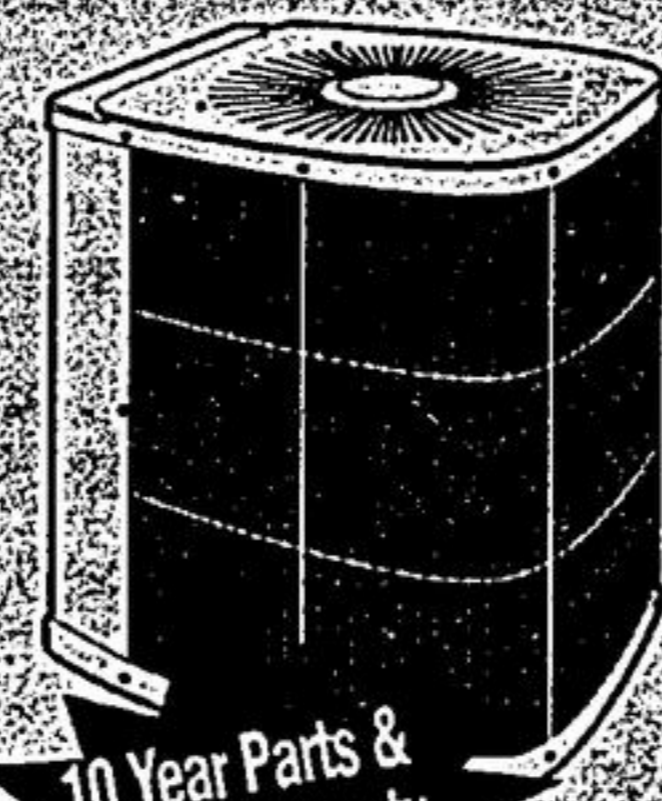
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