

Ice storm cost Aurora over \$40,000 as Aurora seeks disaster relief



By Brock Weir

Cleanup and other issues stemming from the pre-Christmas ice storm have cost Aurora approximately \$40,000, according to Mayor Geoffrey Dawe.

Estimates have begun to come in as Aurora has made the first steps for any disaster relief the Province of Ontario might be willing to hand out.

‘‘It is a combination of our staff overtime and additional contract services that we have brought in,’’ he said. ‘‘The contract services are mostly along the lines of additional crews to clean up branches, chippers, and things like that.’’

The Mayor made his estimate ahead of a Special Council meeting which, in addition to instigating a review of Aurora's garbage and waste contract with Green for Life, also included a call for the Province to include Aurora in a ‘‘disaster area’’ to be included in Ontario's Disaster Relief Assistance Program to deal with the aftermath of the storm.

In his motion, he cited residents experiencing ‘‘substantial damage’’ to their properties as well as municipal properties and infrastructure.

‘‘In the event the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing declares a disaster area in the GTA for the purposes of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, the Council of the Town of Aurora hereby requests that the Town of Aurora similarly be declared a disaster area for the purposes of the program,’’ said Mayor Dawe in his motion. ‘‘Further, given the extent and the magnitude of the damage experienced in [York Region], if the Province does not declare a disaster area, the Province instead consider providing funding related to the severe ice storm costs from sources other than [the program] and if the Minister [declared] a disaster area regarding the private component of the program, Council will immediately, under the authority of the program, appoint members to a disaster relief committee to administer the program.’’

Replacing trees, added Mayor Dawe, is estimated to come in at \$92,000, which would be beyond the Ontario Disaster Relief program.

Following the storm, Aurora received some assistance from Newmarket in providing Aurora with some much needed hydro.

‘‘I think the people of Aurora ought to know the Town of Newmarket came immediately to our help and I don't think they even needed to be asked,’’ said Councillor Evelyn Buck at Saturday's budget meeting.

The Budget meeting also underscored the importance social media played in keeping residents abreast of what was going on outside

of their doors, as well as its limitations.

Speaking towards an increased emphasis on the budget on social media outreach by the municipality, Councillor Chris Ballard highlighted issues experienced online by PowerStream, for instance, which experienced phone outages to keep residents informed and social media is only as good as your power and devices.