

Cleanup continues across Aurora after powerful storm



Cleanup continues across Aurora after a powerful storm ripped through the community on Saturday afternoon.

As The Auroran went to press this week, several parks and trails were still deemed unsafe to use, while work continued on downed powerlines and telephone poles on Wellington Street West between Bayview Avenue and Industrial Parkway.

Aurora's Heritage Conservation District in the northeast quadrant of Yonge and Wellington was particularly hard-hit with century-old trees uprooted, some toppling onto cars and roofs, leaving property owners left still assessing the damage.

In a statement released Tuesday, municipal staff said they were "actively assessing the damage" prioritizing public safety, as well as road and sidewalk safety.

"Following Saturday's severe thunderstorm, our priority was to ensure that all streets were cleared so that emergency and repair vehicles could have access," said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operations. "All streets have been cleared and Alectra re-instated hydro into the historic part of Town. Trails continue to be closed, as many areas have trees down or are in hazardous condition. Staff are working to assess damage and clear hazards with the assistance of Newmarket staff and equipment and contracted service providers.

"Staff will provide updates on trail openings as we complete our assessment and clearing operations. Many parks have also received storm damage and staff are cleaning up downed trees and hanging limbs. We are asking that residents obey barricades and signage and stay off the trails as they may be placing themselves in unknown danger. Staff are also working to reset all facility timers for lights due to the extensive power failure throughout Town. User groups have been informed that lighting may be affected, and users of Tennis courts may experience lighting interruptions until we can re-set all timers."

The storm hit as residents enjoyed the Aurora Farmers' Market and participated in the associated launch of Cycle Aurora.

Mayor Tom Mrakas, who was participating in the event launch, says that those in attendance took shelter underneath the Town Park band shell before it was clear people needed to pitch in to help vendors secure their tents and products.

"Once everyone was safe, that is when it was decided to just drive around [and see what happened]," said Mayor Mrakas. "I don't think anyone realized at that exact moment how severe it was, how many trees had come down, how many power lines and poles had come down, but coming into the Heritage area I saw the devastation that the storm left."

?I think everyone was devastated and actually in shock at what the storm was actually able to do, uprooting 100-year-old trees right out of the ground. The sheer force of the storm was unbelievable and I think a lot of people were just shocked. At the same time, I think most were feeling [thankful] that no one was seriously injured. The things that were damaged are things that can be fixed, but I think most of them were very appreciative as well at how fast everyone from Emergency Services to the power companies, to Town staff?everyone was working around the clock, especially during a long weekend, to try to get power back up, to try and get the area clean, and try to get the area considered a safe environment where people can be around there and feel comfortable again.

?East Gwillimbury and Newmarket have offered staff to come out and help our staff as well. We thank our neighbouring municipalities for their help. We weren't the only ones who were hit; we all know Uxbridge was hit very hard, Stouffville as well. I think all municipalities in York Region are helping where they can to make sure their neighbours are supported and we can continue to clean up and make our communities safe.?

Residents are responsible for trees on their property and in Tuesday's statement, the Town said property owners are asked to ?contact a private contractor to assist in clearing and removal.? Small branches can be bundled for yard waste removal this week.

?All yard waste must be bundled and cannot exceed the length of four feet as it will not fit in the collection truck. Large branches or trunks are the responsibility of the homeowner and should not be placed at the curb for removal.?

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