

## Cleanup continues in Aurora's northwest after brief violent storm



Cleanup efforts continue in pockets of northwest Aurora after a powerful storm ripped through the community on Friday, uprooting trees, upending sidewalks, and causing significant damage to homes, vehicles, and parks.

Municipal workers were still working hard to clean up some stretches of trails and parks, but all municipal roads were quickly re-opened and cleaned of immediate hazards.

"Cleanup efforts are ongoing throughout the community," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in an update on Tuesday afternoon. "While urgent safety concerns have been resolved, the full cleanup and restoration process, including removing damaged trees, stump removal, and replanting will take some time.

"The Lakeview/Willow Farm trail system remains closed while crews continue clean-up and addressing fallen trees and washouts. Residents are asked to respect all trail closure signage and avoid the area until it is safe to reopen. Within Town parks, playgrounds remain safe and open for use. There are some downed trees in parks and we ask residents to avoid those areas and allow space for crews to address those."

At the start of the week, the Mayor said he thanked residents for their ongoing "patience and understanding" during the cleanup effort.

"As our cleanup efforts continue, please note that tree debris from private property is the responsibility of the homeowner, including debris that may have fallen onto your property from a neighbouring residence," said Mayor Mrakas. "Town crews are focused on removing debris from Town-owned trees and municipal properties only."

Friday's storm came at the peak of a heatwave that gripped Southern Ontario last week, keeping many residents home during Canada Day celebrations and through the subsequent days.

The area was under an Environment Canada Severe Thunderstorm Watch.

One resident whose property was impacted by the sudden storm was Rob Gaby, who said he was at a local bank when he received a call from his wife to come home after the event uprooted an oak tree on their property estimated to have been more than 200 years old.

The tree, which stood approximately 80 feet high, fell on two neighbouring properties, leaving a 14-foot wide 'crater' in its place.

'It was just absolutely astounding. The area in Aurora where I live was just a war zone,' he said, adding the neighbourhood lost about a third of its sugar maples, which neighbours come together each spring to tap in what has turned out to be an award-winning maple syrup collective.

'Major kudos to the Aurora Operations team ' they were out there the same day,' says Gaby. 'Willow Farm probably had 10 trees down on it, a very small area, and they were out there cleaning almost right away. They were there Saturday, Sunday, yesterday, and today (Tuesday), and I have never seen so many chippers. I can't say enough good things about Operational Services. They have been tremendous.'

If you're still working to clean up your own properties, the Town of Aurora reminds residents that branches can be collected in regular yard waste pickup.

Branches put out in collection must be no larger than 10 centimetres in diameter, and must be bundled and tied together with twine. Each bundle must weigh 22kg (50 lbs) or less, and must not be longer than 1.2 metres.

By press time this week, the Mayor said the Town was unable to provide information on insurance claims received at the Town level for damage caused by municipal trees and other infrastructure damaged in the weather event.

'When the Town receives a claim alleging damage involving municipal property, it follows a standard claims process. Residents are asked to submit the details of the incident, along with any supporting documentation for review. Each claim is assessed on a case-by-case basis. At this time, we do not have an update on individual claims.'

By Brock Weir  
Editor  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter