

Council updated on storm damage

By Bill Rea

Last month's massive ice storm is still holding the attention of municipal officials.

Caledon councillors were updated last week on the impacts of the storm, as staff and residents face the task of cleaning up in the aftermath.

The power outage is over, however the cleanup has just begun, the staff report stated, adding it will probably take a couple of months.

The focus so far has been on moving downed trees and other debris off roads and sidewalks. The efforts on the part of the Town have concentrated on cleaning up municipal property. There's no word yet on the damage to private property from the storm.

The report also mentioned support that has come from outside the Town; namely a 13-member crew from the Ministry of Natural Resources, the loan of equipment like chippers from other municipalities, etc. Peel Region has also not been charging recycling fees to handle debris.

A second cleanup will be needed in the spring to complete the tree removal, and the report said stumps and trees that are not recovering will have to be removed.

Councillor Allan Thompson commented on the need for a tree seedling program. CAO Doug Barnes told him the Parks and Recreation department has been asked to report on a reforestation program, and they can be asked to include information about seedling.

Councillor Patti Foley observed the Town has an emergency management plan, commenting this is a good time to tweak it. She wanted to make sure the role of other groups, like Meals on Wheels and Caledon Community Services, is considered.

There were also concerns about communications, especially while the power was out. Foley said there were centres where people without power were able to go, adding they could have been given more notice, since there was warning of the storm.

Councillor Richard Paterak said he wanted a meeting with Hydro One officials, commenting he's been hearing a lot of questions from the public. For one thing, while crews were out, he said he understood they were not allowed to go on private property. But there were some residents who needed assistance and got very upset when the crews wouldn't help them. He added some of the crews gave in to the requests, and he said the utility should consider broadening its rules in such emergencies.

Paterak added it should be easy to set up a website to get input and testimonials from the public, as well as ideas on how to handle things if the situation happens again.

Mayor Marolyn Morrison said she had been told by staff at public works yards that the communications equipment didn't work well, and she said a new system should be looked into.

Thompson brought up the problem of trees that fell into rivers. Concerns have already been expressed about their impacts on downstream flows after the spring thaw, and that flooding could result. He said they need to get the trees out, meaning they need people to do it who know what they're doing.