

Editorial ? In an emergency, you do your best with what you have

It's a sad reality that it is impossible to be prepared for everything life throws at us.

All of us have had the experience of seeing carefully laid plans fall apart due to circumstances we had not been counting on. In such situations, all we can do is the best we can.

And while we might have had prior warning that the weather was going to be bad a couple of days before Christmas, there was only so much that could have been done to prepare for the blow in advance. And then we all have to do our best with what we have.

Caledon council had a special meeting Tuesday to debrief from the efforts made to help residents in the recent ice storm that caused so much heartache over Christmas. It became clear early in the meeting that a lot of people stepped up to help out during the crisis.

There were plenty of words of praise for senior Town staff coming from councillors, and that included the people from Fire and Emergency Services, as well as those who helped man the warming centres that were set up. It was also clear, at least from the comments made by councillors, that most people in the community understood the situation, and that those who were helping were doing the best they could with what they had. There has been a lot of appreciation expressed from residents too.

Could things have been better?

Of course they could have been.

But it's also true that one of the advantages of such a mess, as was created by the storm, is it offers a chance for people and officials to look at what was done, and determine what could have been done better. It's an opportunity to determine what measures could be put in place to soften the blow, should such a storm ever happen again.

And let us not forget that it happened once, meaning it could happen again.

Although people have been appreciative, there have been exceptions.

The issue involving grocery gift cards is an example.

A lot of people who went some time without power would have seen a lot of their food spoiled. That would hit some a lot harder than others, and the Province came up with the idea of grocery gift cards to help those in real need.

One of the concerns, and it's a legitimate one, is it wasn't until this week that such cards were available to residents of Peel Region.

There have also been stories of abuse; of people who were not in need getting into line only to get a free handout.

This was a clear example of an area in the emergency response where things could have been handled differently.

But we are not here to be critical, because there are times when action is required, and when the timelines don't allow for much planning.

The Province could have done a better job in dealing with the gift cards, but that is something that can be studied, with improvements worked into the system for the next time such a situation arises.

Premier Kathleen Wynne wrote a column in Tuesday's Toronto Star, explaining the government's response to the crisis.

?Here's a lesson I refuse to take from our recent experience: I do not believe it is better to do nothing than to try and help,? she wrote.

While we are generally not fans of the Wynne government, we applaud the gumption it took to act, rather than sit back to avoid criticism.

And the experience has given all the opportunity to study the lessons that have been learned.

?We all have lessons learned after the fact,? Councillor Allan Thompson commented at Tuesday's meeting. ?I think there were a lot of good lessons learned.?