

Extra facilities planned to collect storm debris

By Bill Rea

Caledon is going to have a spring tree round-up as usual, but it's not going to be usual in practice.

That's because so much work needs to be done to clean up in the aftermath of December's massive ice storm.

Public Works Director David Loveridge update Town councillors on the plans Tuesday.

He reminded councillors the storm was 'fairly devastating,' adding that at the time the bulk of the Town's efforts were aimed at keeping municipal facilities open and making sure the roads were clear and safe so the public and emergency vehicles could get through. The weather conditions made recovery and clean-up work almost impossible at the time, he said, so the priority was focused on dealing with the harsh winter issues, with an understanding there would be a big clean-up job later. Loveridge pointed out extensive damage is still evident in places like Cheltenham and Terra Cotta.

'I know I'm going out on a limb, but I think spring is here,' Loveridge remarked, adding it's time to start thinking about the debris from the storm.

The work remaining to be done includes cleaning up and removing downed trees from road sides, parks and trails; overhead removal and pruning of trees on Town right-of-ways and other lands; getting rid of trees and debris from areas around bridges and culverts (he said a lot of that has already been done); and helping residents get downed trees off their properties and disposed of.

'I spent my weekend getting trees out of my yard,' he told councillors.

In response, Loveridge said the Town has had crews out for about a month cleaning right-of-ways, as well as dealing with the bridges and culverts. 'The bridges and culverts themselves are in pretty good condition,' he said.

Staff from the parks and recreation department have been out cleaning up parks and trails, although Loveridge said they are in pretty good shape too, despite damage.

As well, he said Peel Region is running its regular yard waste program, with extended hours for community recycling centres (CRC) to serve Caledon residents. The facility at 1795 Quarry Dr. (off McLaren Road near Caledon village) will be open regular hours from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays to Saturday, as well as four Sundays (April 27 and May 4, 11 and 18).

In addition, he said the Town will be running 'geographic' drive-thru gathering points early next month to drop off tree debris.

People bringing in tree residue will also be able to collect free mulch. The plan is for these operations to be May 3 at Lino Marino Park at 105 Valleywood Dr.; May 4 at Bolton's North Hill Park as well as at R.J.A. Potts Memorial Park at 125 Pembroke St. in Bolton; May 10 in the parking lot at Town Hall in Caledon East; and May 11 at the Lloyd Wilson Centennial Centre in Inglewood. Loveridge said these centre will be open from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. all those days, and he stressed cars lined up to get in at closing time will not be turned away.

He also said residents can bring tree debris and branches no matter the size. Bundling will not be required and there will be no restrictions on size. Loveridge added they will operate like a drive-thru, with Town staff unloading the material.

'Once you get them there, we will handle them for you,' he said.

He also commented that it would be nice if the Town were able to go street-by-street collecting this debris, but they have to work with the staff and resources that are available. He did say that neighbours are encouraged to work together to get the trees to the drop-off sites.

Loveridge praised the cooperation that's been received from the Region, providing extra yard waste pick-up days as requested for Terra Cotta and Cheltenham (one is planned for this coming Monday - April 28) and opening the CRC the extra Sundays.

Loveridge said the hard part of the effort will be to get a coordinated approach, as well as getting the message out on what's available.

Much of that effort will be through the local media, although he also said there will be extensive use of social media, along with appropriate road signage being posted closer to the dates.

Loveridge also said the Town's annual tree program will have to be delayed until the end of summer so the clean-up can proceed and damage be assessed. Orders for trees will be taken through the Town's website, as well as from order forms available from municipal facilities. Orders will be taken starting in May and continue until the end of June. The trees will be delivered sometime after Labour Day.

Councillor Richard Whitehead pointed out a lot of people in his ward don't have access to trucks or chain saws, so they will need help. He suggested the volunteer firefighters in Mono Mills could be helpful. Whitehead also observed there should be no trouble in getting people to work together, but they will need to understand what they are doing and the best way to participate.

Councillor Gord McClure commented he's been getting calls about damage and debris in Cheltenham, Terra Cotta and Valleywood.

He also said the storm was 'nature's pruning,' adding trees need to be trimmed and pruned, and that people maybe understand that better now.

Councillor Richard Paterak said he's been trying to get the Region to increase weekend staff at the CRCs so people can get through faster. He was worried that people might get discouraged by long line-ups and start dumping debris on the side of roads.

Councillor Doug Beffort wondered how the idea of people helping their neighbours could be facilitated. He said this would be a great opportunity to show the colours of the community.

Whitehead also expressed concern over reports that people have been dragging downed branches off their properties and dropping them in ditches. He suspected that these people don't realize that's unwise because the ditches are part of the storm water management system. One big storm could result in jammed culverts and flooding.

Loveridge told him staff has been checking to make sure ditches are clear.

Mayor Marolyn Morrison pointed out one of the CRC Sundays is Mother's Day (May 11), and she asked if something could be done to reduce the inconvenience. Loveridge said he would look into it.

She was also concerned that there are trees in the Credit River, pointing out she sees them from the bridge on McLaughlin Road. She said a plan is needed, involving Credit Valley Conservation, to get them out. There was a slow melt this winter, but that might not be the case next year if the trees are still there, she warned.