

Jones questions Minister on ice storm funding rejection

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones is wondering why some municipalities in her riding were turned down for relief funding in light of the winter ice storm.

She took on Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Ted McMeekin during Question Period in the legislature recently, asking why he rejected the applications from Shelburne and Melancthon to receive disaster relief funding.

Many municipalities stepped up to assist stranded motorists who were unable to get home as a result of closed roads, Jones said in her question. In my own riding, Shelburne and Melancthon applied for \$51,000 and \$50,000 each to the Disaster Relief Assistance Program, only to be denied.

She asked if it was fair for these municipalities to foot the total bill when they were sheltering stranded motorists from across Ontario.

McMeekin responded priority was given to get money to the communities in the most need as quickly as possible.

Those that have the financial wherewithal to handle the concerns will understand that those that are in greater need should get the assistance that they require, he added, according to Hansard. We can't respond to every request out there. The ice storm was a one-off issue as well.

My question to the minister is, how bad does it have to be? Jones countered.

It doesn't seem fair these municipalities have to foot the bill when they were taking care of Ontarians from across the province, she added. Melancthon has a population of 2,800 people who will now have to shoulder this cost.

Unfortunately the Minister does not realize that the cost of damages in Melancthon would have a serious impact on creating the Township's next budget, she said. The Mayor-elect of Melancthon Darren White stated that the cost of \$50,000 is equivalent to a four per cent tax hike.

We have a process in place, McMeekin replied. Before the ice storm, there was no funding allocated specifically to respond to ice storm issues. This government found a way to provide \$190 million to those most stressed. I think that should be celebrated.

The Minister should re-assess the requests from Shelburne and Melancthon in light of the significant burden these costs will mean to their municipal budgets, Jones concluded.