

Halton Hills wants ice storm disaster aid

Multi-million dollar clean-up costs could be shared by provincial and federal governments

Halton Hills Council voted unanimously to ask for provincial and federal money to help pay extra costs due to the ice storm and its aftermath - estimated at at least \$1.24-million, but at the same time are unhappy the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) does not cover more than \$1-million of the costs from Town-owned Halton Hills Hydro, or to replace trees on public property.

On Monday, politicians voted to ask the province to declare Halton Hills - called the epicentre of the storm by Environment Canada - a "disaster area" as required under ODRAP rules. The Town estimates the storm and cleanup cost Public Works and the Fire Department \$100,000 each, and \$14,000 for Recreation and Parks department. To clear, dispose of debris and remove trees would be an additional \$1.3-million, plus \$750,000 more for tree

planting.

Despite the Town's protest that HHH and the Town have a unique close relationship, the province, to date, had insisted HHH is not a municipality, board or agency, and so is not covered by the ODRAP. HHH may recoup some of its additional costs through an application to the Ontario Energy Board, or through a reduction of dividends/interest payments to the Town and its ratepayers.

Terry Fenton, Acting-Manager of Local Government for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, detailed the ODRAP to councillors, stressing it is not a substitute for insurance, but is intended to help those whose essential property has been extensively damaged by a sudden, unexpected natural disaster.

The program does not provide full cost recovery, but is meant to "alleviate financial hardship and help replace essential items"



in affected communities. Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette questioned why tree replacement costs are not covered - Fenton said they are not deemed "essential" - and Bonnette asked if the policy had been reviewed. Fenton said they always review the lessons learned during an event.

Georgetown Councillor Dave Kentner made an impassioned plea to reevaluate the ODRAP exclusion of tree replacement costs, arguing trees are "essential to good health, they take care of cooling or climate change,

they take care of the quality of the air we breathe and are one of the main supports for animal life. He said the storm's devastation will deprive two or three generations of significant trees.

Ward Two Councillor Bryan Lewis sought assurances that ODSPA staff saw the utter devastation in Halton Hills first hand - not just the cleanup underway - noting the storm cleanup could cost each Halton Hills resident \$38, or \$64 including hydro costs.

Councillors instructed staff to monitor and make any applications required related to the opportunities for financial assistance. Councillors and staff will also have approval to meet with the Minister and offer officials at an annual municipal conference next month in Toronto.

The ODRAP also has a private component allowing individuals, homeowners, farmers, all businesses, and non-profit organizations to apply for funds, which are raised by the community and matched, up to 2:1, by the province.

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Mayor thanks residents for 'patience and strength' following ice storm power outages

Halton Hills will be a stronger community having lived through the ice storm and its aftermath, according to Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette

who said the devastation spawned countless acts of kindness.

"There's been numerous stories of people taking in their neighbours for days...we know of many different groups who provided food for hydro employee..." Bonnette said at Council on Monday, adding it was "small town living at its best."

After "very difficult" couple of weeks there's still a lot of work to do, but Bonnette said the "generosity and spirit of our community and been tremendous."

Bonnette thanked Halton Hills residents for their "patience and strength" and said the Town will learn from the experience. "I think at the end of it, we will be a stronger community" when they analyze emergency response and look at enhancements.

Bonnette said the issue of municipal compensation following the ice storm is on the agenda tomorrow (Friday) at a meeting of GTA Mayors.

Bonnette was invited to the meeting by Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, and he expected Toronto Mayor Rob Ford and Caledon's Mayor to be at the closed door meeting, designed to bring municipalities together to jointly ask for relief funding.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ACTON AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Annual Meeting to be held on
Saturday, January 18th, 2014,
starting at 9:30am in the boardroom of the
Dufferin Rural Heritage Community Centre.

The first part of the meeting is open to the public and anyone who might be interested in becoming a new member.

Come out and see what we are all about.

After the break, the meeting is open to current members only. The purpose of the second half will be to receive the Financial Statements for 2013 and for the Election of Officers and Directors.

Jill Medland
Secretary/Treasurer
Acton Ag Society

What's Your Beef?



Put it in a letter to the Editor!
It's better than just chewing your cud!

Deadline is Tuesday at noon.