

King to receive final ice storm payment

By Mark Pavilons

Ontario has now offered final payments to all municipalities and conservation authorities impacted by the December 2013 ice storm through the province's Ice Storm Assistance Program.

Ontario announced in February 2014 that it would pay 100 per cent of eligible disaster response and recovery costs to municipalities and conservation authorities severely affected by the storm. The province immediately began working with municipalities and conservation authorities to obtain documentation for their claim submissions and worked closely with them through the claims process. As municipalities and conservation authorities completed their submissions, the province offered interim and final payments beginning in February 2015. Ontario worked with some municipalities until December 2015 to help finalize more complex claims.

The Township of King incurred \$226,576.84 in eligible ice storm-related costs. On May 27, 2015, King was issued an interim payment for \$76,310.67, so the final payment will represent the remainder amount.

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he received verbal confirmation from ministry personnel that 86.6% (\$226,576 of \$261,532) of King's submission has been approved for reimbursement. Details will follow outlining areas of adjustment.

"To be honest, I am delighted we are receiving this money as the alternative was not as appealing," Pellegrini said.

York Region is receiving \$2,239,631.28 from the province to cover eligible response and recovery costs that were incurred as a result of the 2013 ice storm, such as setting up warming centres, and the cleanup of debris.

According to Conrad Spezowka, spokesperson with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as part of the review process, ministry staff worked with claimants to give them the opportunity to provide all evidence they had to justify their claim.

"We want to reimburse 100 per cent of eligible costs. If the final set of claimants can provide further or additional necessary documentation before final payment are issued, the province will consider the additional documentation. We will continue to work with claimants who have outstanding questions before issuing final payments," he said.

Every municipality and conservation authority who submitted a claim received interim and final payment offers. In total, 58 claims were received and the province is providing more than \$131 million in financial assistance. Ontario is committed to working with municipalities who may have outstanding questions about their final payment offers.

The Ice Storm Assistance Program is a one-time disaster relief program for the December 2013 ice storm. It focuses on costs related to the immediate emergency response, such as setting up warming centres, and the subsequent cleanup of debris necessary to protect public safety.

The province issued interim payments to eligible claimants of about one-third of the claimed amount in advance of a completed review.

Ontario will be reimbursed by the federal government for a portion of the eligible response and recovery costs under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.

The ice storm caused widespread damage and blackouts across southern, western and eastern Ontario. At the peak of the storm, over 800,000 hydro customers were without power.

"Our government has remained committed to providing assistance to those municipalities and conservation authorities that were severely impacted by the December 2013 ice storm. We will continue to stand with our cities, towns and citizens when they are in great need," said Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.