

King in line for aid for ice storm costs

By Mark Pavilons

Funding from the province to help defray some of the costs of the ice storm cleanup comes as good news to King Township.

"I am absolutely delighted that the Ontario government is helping municipalities affected by the December 2013 ice storm. This funding is critical for our small municipality and is greatly appreciated," said King Mayor Steve Pellegrini.

Ontario is helping municipalities affected by the December 2013 ice storm by working with the federal government to fund 100 per cent of their eligible recovery costs through a one-time Ice Storm Assistance Program.

While program details are still being finalized, eligible costs may be as much as \$190 million based on estimates from municipalities. It is anticipated that the program would cover costs related to the immediate emergency response, such as setting up warming centres, and the subsequent cleanup of debris necessary to protect public safety.

Costs incurred by the province for a natural disaster of this size qualify for federal government assistance under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program. Ontario intends to seek federal reimbursement for costs under this program.

Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, said the province came up with the numbers based on the requests by municipalities and she's "hopeful they'll get what they asked for."

The money will provide a cushion. Jaczek said while they're discussing the matter with the feds, who also have disaster relief funding available, she's not sure whether they'll "come to the table."

A group of Greater Toronto Area (GTA) mayors and chairs gathered in Mississauga recently to make the plea to the province and federal government to share the costs of the ice storm.

They passed a motion calling on the feds and Province to treat all municipalities "equally and equitably" when it comes to distributing the funds.

The motion also stated several municipalities have applied for assistance through the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP), but concerns were expressed that ODRAP "doesn't adequately recognize the full costs of extreme weather events."

Mayor Pellegrini said the storm caused \$121,317 in damage to Township property and infrastructure. He added the municipality is getting into a good financial position, with reserves to help fund infrastructure, and he doesn't want to see it all used now.

"We can't keep going to a property tax payer to fund it," he remarked.