

Mayor's Message

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Hi North Kawartha,

Hi North Kawartha! Mayor Carolyn here with another video update. Based on consultation with my Emergency Municipal Control Group today, I have declared the Emergency over for North Kawartha. Now this doesn't mean that everything is back to normal- far from it in fact. We will continue to have clean up and repairs for months to come. Before I get into that however, I would like to take a moment to provide some further information about the Emergency Declaration as there is a bit of confusion as to what it actually means and does.

An emergency is defined under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act as "a situation, or an impending situation that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons or substantial damage to property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk, an accident or an act whether intentional or otherwise".

Consideration of an Emergency Declaration began a few hours after the storm as reports began to come in from frontline workers. The decision to declare an Emergency the following day, was based on advice and information from Township staff, specifically the CAO, Fire Chief and Roads Supervisor. By Sunday afternoon, fourteen Township roads were deemed impassable due to downed hydro lines and significant tree fall. Our ability to respond to emergency calls was severely hampered because of all the blocked public and private roads. In addition, our primary communication system for First Responders went down forcing us to use alternate communication. Cell service was intermittent making it difficult to stay in contact with each other and those on the frontlines. With this knowledge it became clear that our community's situation posed a threat to essential services, a danger to life and property, and was exceeding the capabilities of our municipal resources and personnel to respond. Therefore I declared an Emergency and our Municipal Control Group was called into action.

Making this declaration however, did not mean that our municipality had immediate access to funds, resources, and people. We all know the storm damage was not limited to North Kawartha. It created a huge swath of destruction right across central and eastern Ontario, affecting many townships and impacting over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million people. A total of 14 municipalities declared emergencies. Whether they declared or not, every township around us was dealing with the same issues and trying to look after themselves and their own communities.

Declaring an Emergency for North Kawartha gave us the ability to make decisions quickly and the opportunity to authorize expenditures beyond our approved budget if required. It also signaled to all other levels of government and various support agencies that we were in a situation that put incredible strain on our local resources and response capabilities. It is important for folks to note that we have a total of seven employees in our Roads Department, nine employees combined in Parks and Rec and Waste, and a Volunteer Fire Department. Responding to this Public Works Emergency as well continuing to deal with our regular duties and calls for service was a challenge for all municipal staff to say the least.

On May 31st, I toured the entire Township with staff and officials from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and Emergency Management Ontario. We saw the devastation from Lasswade and 504, through Jack Lake and down to the north shore of Stoney Lake. I have also been in regular contact with our MPP Dave Smith about our situation. These discussions and meetings are vital as we are requesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs activate their disaster assistance programs specifically the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance and Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians.

Over the past few weeks we have seen power restored to most, if not all, residents along with phone service, and once Hydro gave us the all clear, our Roads department worked tirelessly to fully open up all affected Township roads. Our Fire Chief has confirmed that we are now able to provide the appropriate level of fire protection service and emergency response for our entire community.

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will be incurring costs for the months of clean up ahead as well as having to repair some roads that were damaged as result of hydro restoration operations. We also recognize the significant costs faced by residents for their own clean-up and repairs. That is why we have partnered with the County of Peterborough and our Waste Services Provider to offer further disposal options for all residents.

I understand that there are a few folks that would like the Township to do more to assist with private property clean-up, unfortunately we don't have the people or the resources to do so. Believe me, if there was more that we could do to help our community right now, we would already be doing it. If further support becomes available we will let everyone know and we are very hopeful that provincial assistance will be made available soon. Please continue to check www.northkawartha.ca for updates on our recovery efforts.

Our Fire Chief has been in contact with the MNRF about the amount of damage and tree fall on crown lands and has made them aware of our concerns regarding forest fire risks. We have requested support through the Bancroft Minden Forest Company to clean up and remove the debris from the crown lands and ditches abutting our roadways. Salvage permits must be approved by the MNRF and this process can take several weeks as they need to find a company willing to carry out the salvage activities.

At our last Council meeting, Council passed a motion requesting that the Federal Government and the Province provide an explanation for the lack of any widespread alert warning people and communities within the storm's path. We also asked for improvements to the emergency alert system to stop this deadly lack of notification from happening again.

So even though I have declared the Emergency over we are not out of the woods yet. Not only do we have a long clean up ahead of us there is the potential for further power outages and downed trees with so many remaining trees that have been destabilized and loosened from storm. I know it's depressing and frustrating and overwhelming, but we will get through this.

I am so proud of township staff and our volunteer firefighters for their incredible dedication and tireless efforts for our community. I am amazed by Hydro One's ability to rebuild the power grid and restore electricity to hundreds of thousands of people as quickly as they did. And I am especially proud of you, the hundreds of community members that came together to clear roads, driveways and each other's homes, cottages and properties.

The understanding, support and care that you've shown to each other is inspiring.

Finally, I think it's important for us all to remember that 11 people lost their lives in the May 2-4 storm. Four of those deaths were in Peterborough County and one was in North Kawartha. We can repair our roads and hydro lines, we can rebuild our homes and cottages, but we cannot bring back those lost lives. So let's continue to be patient, understanding, supportive and thankful for each other. Let's be grateful we have the opportunity to rebuild and restore... And let's not forget how blessed we are to share this beautiful place called North Kawartha. Until next time everyone, be well and take care.

Thank you.

