Staff Memorandum

To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	2025 Ice Storm Recovery Update
Date	April 30, 2025
Ward	All
From	Dave Friary, Director of Operations
	Kevin Rankin, Manager of Parks and Forestry
Executive Member Approval	Bala Araniyasundaran, General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update concerning the status of the ongoing recovery operations in relation to damage caused from the March 29th and 30th Ice Storm that swept through our region.

Appendix:

Attachment - The Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance (MDRA) program

Memo Author:

Kevin Rankin, Manager of Parks and Forestry

File #:

N/A

Pending #:

N/A

The March 29th and 30th Ice Storm that swept through our region had a devastating impact to trees and hydro infrastructure across the Region. In Barrie, the inventory of the total impact is currently being assessed by a team of tree experts. The northern part of Barrie was particularly hard hit with ice accumulation greater than 15mm in most areas, and across the entire city we anticipate the resulting impact to be tens of thousands of trees being damaged, and thousands destroyed.

Operations Department staff, along with support from other key departments such as Waste Management and Environmental Sustainability, have been working to manage the resulting tree debris created on public and private property.

Due to the nature of the event, the City's clean-up operation is best described in phases that will take place over months. The damage to trees and vegetation will have a lasting impact that will take years to recover. The phases of work associated with the City trees are described below:

Phase 1 (completed):

- Getting traveled portion of streets open/cleared and ensuring driveway entrances are open
- Removing immediate hazards over roads and sidewalks

Phase 2 (Underway):

- Removing broken (hanging) branches from trees, clearing sidewalks and collecting downed branches and trees on boulevards
- Removing trees that sustained critical damage, as identified by a Tree Risk Assessor Qualified and Certified Arborist, and pose an immediate or high risk hazard
- Collection of private brush piled on boulevards and within road rights-of-way
- Clearing fallen city trees from private yards/back yards (Note: There is 125 km of forest edge bordering on private properties, with currently over 300 known locations where tree branches or whole trees have fallen along this edge)
- Inventory of remaining (damaged) trees – estimated duration of 6 weeks to complete inventory of all street, park, trail and forest edge inspections by a team of 5 Tree Risk Assessor Qualified and Certified Arborists
- Clean-up of debris from damaged trees in all city parks
- Clearing of fallen and hanging trees over 150km of trails
- Corrective Pruning and removal of heavily damaged city trees (note this step could take to the end of 2025 to complete)
- Please note that arborists will be recommending corrective pruning and other measures to save as many damaged trees as possible, however all trees that are structurally unsound, or will become so in a short time period will have to be removed. Authority to prune, remove and plant City owned trees is granted in the Public Tree By-law (2014-116).

Phase 3 (not started):

- Stump removal (grinding out) of all destroyed trees
- Replanting of trees
- Long term care of damaged trees (monitoring and additional pruning, watering and fertilizing as necessary)
- Forest Health Assessments completed to determine short and long term management needs for heavily affected forested areas
- Complete City canopy assessment to ascertain total canopy loss as a result of the ice storm.

The clean-up operation is transitioning from arborist ground crews with chippers to larger equipment with grapple loaders, grapple mounted chipper units and crews with grapple mounted excavators and large material bins. This is due to the massive piles of intertangled brush in large areas of the north end of the city being unwieldy for hand crews to manage. City forestry crews have been supplemented with over thirty large, contracted crews and nine arborist crews from seven other municipalities (Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Brantford, London, Cambridge, Burlington and Markham). Local construction and waste management companies have also jumped in to assist with clean-up of the tree debris.

As of April 25, 98% of the city streets had one pass through by crews and second passes through streets were underway. The majority of streets will require at least one more pass through due to the private brush that continues to be placed at the curb. The estimated time for completion of Phase 2 is difficult to provide, as material continues to be brought to curb after the crews initial pass through. A deadline for residents to place brush on the curb has not been set, so Phase 2 will continue until the deadline for clean-up has been determined.

While the number of people and crews vary from day to day due to operational issues (e.g. equipment breakdowns), there has been anywhere from 45 to 50 crews (each with 2 – 6 staff) completing clean-up. Crews include City Forestry staff, forestry pre-qualified contractors and their subcontractors, brush collection and material collection contractors, and crews from several supporting municipalities (Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Brantford, London, Cambridge, Burlington and Markham). A general description of work assignments are as follows:

- City and supporting municipality Forestry crews are focused on removing hazards and hanging branches over streets, along with collection of downed branches on boulevards.
- Contractors with large brush removal equipment (grapple loading chippers, large grapple mounted dump units, small units with grapples that can move debris into containers, and contractors with large roll-off bins for loading wood debris) are working to clear streets with large brush piles
- Contractors with specialized equipment (e.g. large cranes, large cutting heads on excavator/extended cranes) were removing trees on/over houses, lifting large trees fallen into areas difficult to access for workers.
- Parks maintenance crews were collecting fallen branches and piling or removing from parks

- Contract crews with large material chippers/grinders were using mini-equipment with grapples to move branches out of parks and chip in parking lots or on street sides (e.g. Sunnidale Park)
- A team of Certified Arborists with Tree Risk Assessment Qualifications are completing tree risk assessments on all city trees, starting with street trees.

Landfill Operations have shifted to manage the large influx of brush brought to the landfill from residents and contractors. As of April 19, 2025, 1,536 tonnes of brush have been accepted over the scales with an additional estimated 3,000 tonnes dropped by city staff and approved contractors since April 1, 2005.

Landfill hours were adjusted to increase operating days and times for residents, contractors and city staff to deposit material. Tipping fees for residential brush has been waived at the landfill site until Saturday, May 31, 2025 to support storm clean-up. The Recycling Depot, located at the lower gate area of the site, opened early for the season and is temporarily accepting small loads of residential brush debris. Large loads/commercial traffic must use the upper landfill/scales. For more information about the landfill, visit barrie.ca/landfill.

Brush and chips brought to the landfill are being processed and hauled away by an external contractor at no cost to the city in addition to reuse in city parks for lining trails, dog parks, and naturalization areas.

The current estimated costs for clean-up, removal of hazard trees, corrective pruning of damaged trees and replanting of trees lost to the ice storm, landfill collection and management of the wood material and associated costs is approximately $10M.

Provincial Disaster Assistance Program

The Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance (MDRA) program helps municipalities recover from extraordinary costs after a natural disaster. A disaster is defined as a sudden, unexpected, extraordinary, natural event that results in eligible municipal costs at least equal to three percent of a municipality's own purpose taxation levy.

The City's own purpose taxation levy for 2023 was $282 million. Three (3) percent of this is approximately $8.5 million. The City would qualify for funding from this program should the expected financial impact of $10 million be realized. Under this program, eligible costs up to the approximately $8.5 million target would be funded by the Province at 75%, with 95% funding available for eligible costs that exceed this target.

Eligible expenses include capital costs to repair public infrastructure, as well as certain operating costs. For a more detailed listing of operating and capital eligible expenses, please refer to Sections 3, 4 and 5 of Attachment MDPA Guidelines. Some examples of eligible and ineligible costs are:

Eligible costs include:

- Debris cleanup crews from outside service providers
- Rental of specialized equipment (excavators)
- Employee expenses directly related to the disaster (e.g., meals, mileage)
- Repair or restoration of municipal property and infrastructure (e.g., municipal roads, buildings, sidewalks) to pre-disaster condition

Ineligible costs include:

- Regular salaries and benefits of employees, even if the employee has been diverted to disaster-related work
- Grinding of tree stumps, tree replacement or tree canopy restoration
- Damage to private property

Key Messages:

- We are focused on making the first full pass-through streets to collect brush on boulevards and address any hangers/immediate hazards
- 98% of the City streets have been cleared of storm-damaged debris at least once
- Most streets will have at least two pass throughs to collect brush on boulevards and complete corrective pruning and hazard tree removals.
- Tree risk assessments across the city have begun in earnest, and all of the city street trees will be assessed (by Tuesday, April 29th) with the next priority being damaged city trees next to or fallen into residential properties (note >300 calls in for inspections of these to date).
- Park inspections will be completed in the coming weeks and trail inspections to-date have shown that most trails have trees fallen across or have large branches hanging over the trail and have been temporarily signed closed to warn the public of the hazards.
- Residents are asked to continue to show patience as we move through the next several months of clean-up operations across the city.

More details on the day-to-day operations updates on status are available on the City website (www.barrie.ca/alerts/ice-storm).