

The Uxbridge Cosmos – Special Early Edition – Tuesday, May 24, 2022

On Saturday, May 21, a category EF-2 tornado touched down in the centre of the Township of Uxbridge, destroying homes, businesses, a church, and hundreds of trees. Electricity was out throughout much of the township, and as such, internet connectivity was lost to almost every resident in Uxbridge. News of the just-invoked state of emergency, where to shelter, and other vital information was only transmissible through word-of-mouth and the local radio station – but no one could listen to a radio.

On May 22, less than 24 hours after the storm, township officials approached the *Uxbridge Cosmos* and asked its publisher, Lisha Van Nieuwenhove, whether it was possible to publish that week's newspaper earlier than normal, as the newspaper was the only media through which the township could communicate its urgently-needed information. The township also offered to assist with the distribution of the newspaper by gathering volunteers (the paper is normally delivered via Canada Post).

After quickly making appropriate arrangements with printers, reporters, graphic designers and advertisers, the publisher was able to confirm with the municipality that it would be possible to create, print and distribute the newspaper on the Monday and Tuesday, and the paper could be delivered, by hand, on Tuesday evening (the paper normally "hits the streets" on Wednesday, after printing, and is dated Thursday of each week).

Because there was no electricity at the *Cosmos's* office, which is located mere metres away from the path the tornado took, the publisher was able to move the newsroom to the barn operated by her husband's family. The barn, also without electricity, was being serviced by a

generator, and the publisher was able to tap into that electricity and set up her computer, an extra monitor, and phone charging implements in order to produce the newspaper.

One reporter had to ask the local McDonald's restaurant (also operating on a generator) if he could set up in the restaurant to write and file his stories – they graciously accommodated him.

In less than 48 hours, a team of two photographers, one reporter, one graphic designer, and one editor/layout designer/newsroom coordinator/publisher was able to create a 12-page newspaper. The special edition was sent to the printer's late in the afternoon on Tuesday, May 24, and by the time the publisher drove to collect 8,800 copies of the paper, the edition was ready. It was quickly driven back to Uxbridge, and almost 50 volunteers were waiting at the town's public library, ready to hand deliver copies of the paper. The Scouts, the Rotary Club, Optimists, individuals, township staff (including the mayor and his daughter) all pitched in and ventured out on foot (as many streets were still impassable because of fallen trees and electrical wires) to ensure the entire downtown core of both businesses and residences all received a copy of the newspaper. The newspaper publisher herself and one reporter also delivered several hundred copies.

In the days and weeks following the tornado and the delivery of this "special edition", hundreds of residents expressed their gratitude for having received the newspaper, saying they had needed the information, and that it was something that connected them when everything else that had happened left them feeling disconnected.

The publisher of the *Cosmos*, and her team, all went to bed on the night of May 24 feeling exhausted, satisfied and humbled by all those who had come together to help make sure that friends and neighbours were brought together in a desperate time of fear and need.

The Uxbridge Cosmos

Vol. 18 No. 21

TheCosmos.ca

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Special Early Edition



THE AFTERMATH - The unassuming apartment building at the corner of King St. W. and Spruce St. (across from the train station) sustained significant damage when a severe storm ripped through Uxbridge on Saturday afternoon. Dozens of cars were damaged, power lines were cut down by trees, and a state of emergency has been put in place for the entire township. *Photo by John Cavers*

Storm over. Now real, hard work begins

by Roger Varley

There is still no official confirmation that Uxbridge was hit by a tornado on Saturday afternoon, but residents who lived through it are convinced that *is* what caused the incredible damage in the downtown area.

The storm hit at 1:20 p.m. Saturday, and knocked out power to almost the entire township. Power was not the only thing knocked out: numerous houses, apartment buildings and other structures were damaged - some severely - power lines were down in many locations and an untold number of trees were either blown over or simply blown apart by the intensity of the storm. Hydro was restored to the southern retail area of town Monday morning, but some areas of town could remain without

power for at least another day.

Within two hours of the storm, Uxbridge's emergency management team was meeting at the fire station to lay out plans for dealing with the crisis. Most members of the fire department were called in to handle various dangerous situations caused by downed power lines and public works employees set to work clearing as many roads as possible to make them passable. For most of Saturday and Sunday, many streets in the downtown area were completely blocked, making it almost impossible, in the words of an old joke, to get there from here.

At a news conference Sunday evening, Mayor Dave Barton said there had been no reports of any serious injuries resulting from the storm, despite its destructive power. He said a state of emergency has been declared in the township,

which will remain in effect until further notice. The declaration allows the emergency management team, headed by Fire Chief Phil Alexander, to take such actions as they deem necessary to ensure the safety of residents.

As part of that emergency, Barton and Alexander listed a number of things residents should be aware of. All outdoor fires and burning are banned immediately; residents are asked to avoid the downtown area to allow hydro and other workers carry out their tasks unimpeded; all appliances should be checked when power is restored to make sure there are no problems; residents should stay away from downed power lines; do not use barbecues or home generators indoors; be extra careful with candles.

Barton said the township was inundated with

...continued on page 8

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

Catch the Ace
PROGRESSIVE WEEKLY LOTTERY

May 24 draw postponed until
May 31 due to power outage.

ALL TICKETS SOLD THIS PAST WEEK WILL REMAIN IN THE DRUM AND TICKETS WILL REMAIN ON SALE AT ALL OUR RETAILERS.

Tickets available at PharmaSave Uxbridge (both locations), Vince's Market Uxbridge, Canadian Tire Uxbridge, Uxbridge Legion Branch 170 and Stouffville IDA Pharmacy.

In support of
Rotary Club of Uxbridge, Jumpstart, and other local organizations.

Lottery rules at uxbridgerotary.com/catchtheace
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Uxbridge at a Glance

The Corporation of The Township of Uxbridge
51 Toronto Street South, P.O. Box 190
Uxbridge L9P 1T1
905-852-9181 info@uxbridge.ca

The Township of
UXBRIDGE

Trail Capital of Canada

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MORE INFO  www.uxbridge.ca

Council & Committee Meetings

Meeting Schedule for May, 2022

Monday, May 30
CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND
TRANSITION, 6:30 p.m.

Proclamations for the Month of May

May is Community Living month
May 20 - Bike to Work Day
May 28 - World Menstrual Health
Awareness Day
May 29 - June 5 - Durham Pride Week

Notice of Public Meeting Regarding the Township of Uxbridge Development Charges

Take notice that on Monday, June 20, 2022, the Council of the Township of Uxbridge will hold a public meeting pursuant to The Development Charges Act, 1997, regarding proposed development charge rates and policies that will be applied throughout the Township. It is proposed that enactment of a development charges by-law by Council would occur on a date after the public meeting.

Development charges are levied against new development and are a primary source of funding for growth-related capital expenditures. The 2022 Development Charges Amendment Background Study relates to the provision of the following eligible DC General Services: Development-Related Studies, Library Services, By-law Enforcement (Animal Control) and Parks & Recreation. In addition to the services considered under the DC Amendment Study, the Township's current By-law No. 2019-076 will continue to apply as it relates to all Township-wide Fire & Rescue and Services Related to a Highway (includes Township Engineering and Public Works).

Council is required under The Development Charges Act, 1997 to hold at least one public meeting to allow the public the opportunity to review and provide comments on the 2022 Development Charges Amendment Background Study, related staff reports and the proposed development charges by-law.

All interested parties are invited to attend the public meeting:

Date: Monday, June 20, 2022
Time: 11:30 a.m.
Location: Council Chambers/virtually via Teams

Any person may attend the public meeting and make written or verbal representation either in support of or in opposition to the by-law. Written submissions are invited and should be directed to Debbie Leroux, Township Clerk (dleroux@uxbridge.ca) no later than 12:00 PM on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. Written comments received prior to the meeting and submissions made at the public meeting will be considered by Council prior to the enactment of a new development charges by-law.

Technical inquiries should be directed to Donna Condon, Treasurer at 905-852-9181 x 210 or dcondon@uxbridge.ca

A copy of the 2022 Development Charges Amendment Background Study was made available on the Township's website www.uxbridge.ca on May 12, 2022. A copy of the development charges by-law will be made available on the Township's website on or before June 6, 2022.

DATED AT the Township of Uxbridge this 25th day of May 2022.
Debbie Leroux, Township Clerk

Notice of the Extension of an Interim Control By-Law

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge passed **By-law No. 2022-063** to amend **By-law No. 2021-059** which was passed on the 10th day of May, 2021, pursuant to Section 38 of the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990, as amended, to extend the period of time during which Interim Control will be in effect on all the lands in the Township of Uxbridge with respect to New Drug Addiction Treatment and Harm Reduction Facilities including Methadone Dispensaries for a total period of two years.

AND TAKE NOTICE that the Interim Control By-law applies to all of the lands within the geographic limits of the Township of Uxbridge. For this reason, no Key Map is provided.

AND TAKE NOTICE that Council of the Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge has authority pursuant to Section 38 of the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990, as amended, to extend the period during which the Interim Control By-law will be in effect to a total period not exceeding two years.

AND TAKE NOTICE that any individual, corporation or public body may appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal in respect of the By-law by filing with the Clerk of The Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge, not later than 4:30 p.m. on the **17th day of July, 2022**, a notice of appeal. The notice of appeal must set out the objection to the By-law and the reasons in support of the objection together with the Ontario Land Tribunal fee of \$1,100.00. Cheques must be made payable to the **MINISTER OF FINANCE**.

PLEASE NOTE that only individuals, corporations and public bodies may appeal a Zoning By-law to the Ontario Land Tribunal. A notice of appeal may not be filed by an unincorporated association or group. However, a notice of appeal may be filed in the name of an individual who is a member of the association or the group on its behalf. An explanation of the purpose and effect of the By-law is given below and a complete copy of the Interim Control By-law is attached.

DATED AT THE TOWNSHIP OF UXBRIDGE THIS 18th DAY OF MAY, 2022.

Debbie Leroux, Clerk
Township of Uxbridge
Box 190, 51 Toronto St. S.
Uxbridge, Ontario
L9P 1T1
905-852-9181 ext. 228
dleroux@uxbridge.ca

Township File: N/A
Interim Control – New Drug Addiction Treatment and Harm Reduction Facilities including Methadone Dispensaries

PURPOSE AND EFFECT OF THE BY-LAW

• The Interim Control By-law (No. 2021-059) was passed to allow Township staff and consultants to undertake a study in respect of land use policies for new drug addiction treatment and harm reduction facilities including methadone dispensaries and clinics, needle exchange sites, overdose prevention sites, and drug addiction treatment and drug rehabilitation residential facilities for all the lands in the Township of Uxbridge. The study will provide a basis for the development of a policy and regulatory framework, anticipated to include amendments to the Township's Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

• The Interim Control By-law provides that notwithstanding the permitted uses and regulations of the Township Zoning By-law, no person shall use any land, building or structure or expand any use on the land, or use or erect any building or structure, including any addition to an existing building for the purpose of new drug addiction treatment and harm reduction facilities including methadone dispensaries and clinics, needle exchange sites, overdose prevention sites, and drug addiction treatment and drug rehabilitation residential facilities (including those located as an accessory or ancillary use within a pharmacy, other retail store or other similar commercial or institutional use).

• The Interim Control By-law was to remain in effect until May 10, 2022 unless otherwise extended in accordance with Section 38 of the Planning Act or repealed by Council at an earlier date.

• Council has now extended the Interim Control By-law to provide for the Interim Control to be in effect for a total period of time being two years from May 10, 2021 in accordance with Section 38 of the Planning Act.

**Open Air
Fire Ban
In Effect**
in the Township of Uxbridge



Township of Uxbridge documents are available in alternate formats upon request.
Please fill out the Request for Alternate Formats Form at uxbridge.ca/accessibility

email: accessibility@uxbridge.ca
phone: 905-852-9181 ext.209

Uxbridge at a Glance continued

Municipal Storm Update

On May 21, a significant storm event occurred in Uxbridge which caused extensive damage through the Township and in the urban centre. The Township declared a state of emergency on May 21. The State of Emergency will remain in effect until further notice.

Our first concern is for the safety and security of our residents. If you have elderly or at-risk family or friends that you have not been able to contact since the storm, please check on them. If you are unable to check on them yourself and have immediate concerns for their safety, please contact local police.

What are key resources for Residents?

In an emergency situation, please call 911.

To inquire about emergency social service supports such as housing, food or other, please contact 905-666-6239 ext. 1751 or email ess@durham.ca

The Township is responding to resident concerns and requests in order of priority. The Township's main reception number 905-852-9181 is receiving messages and staff working offsite will return messages as they are able.

Report On Damages

Many structures were damaged in the storm. Building inspectors have been deployed to assess the significance of the damage. Approximately 36 properties were damaged and required Building Officials to issue legislative orders to repair. These orders may be required for insurance purposes. A few properties were determined to be unsafe for occupancy due to immediate danger to occupants. Many other properties were inspected, and the damage sustained did not warrant building safety concerns. Building inspections will continue as needed.

Options for Financial Relief and Social Assistance

Support for residents with housing, shelter or other needs is being coordinated by Durham Regional Social Support. Residents in need should call 905-666-6239 ext. 1751 or email ess@durham.ca

The Township has applied to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to activate the process for financial assistance for private property owners. A Provincial Disaster Assessment team will be onsite to inspect physical damage. **All impacted residents are required to contact their insurance companies as soon as possible to start the claim process. Residents should also keep track of all expenses incurred for future claims.**

Residents who feel any storm damage to their property was related to Township of Uxbridge equipment, facilities, trees, etc., should make an insurance claim. Learn more at: **Insurance Claims - Township of Uxbridge.**

Road Closures

visit Uxbridge.ca/roads for up-to-date notices.



**Well Water
and Food
Handling Safety**

May 22, 2022

For tips on food safety in a power outage and well-water information please visit our emergency information page at www.uxbridge.ca

Downed Trees and Limbs

Residents in urban Uxbridge or a hamlet are asked to neatly pile tree debris (regardless of size) curbside. Township staff and contractors will be chipping and removing the debris. Please do not pile debris so that sidewalks or roadways are blocked.

Do not attempt to clean up trees that are within 10 metres of a power line.

Disposal of Waste

The Region of Durham is temporarily removing the limit on the number of garbage bags that can be placed out at the curb for collection. Residents can also place spoiled food, storm debris or other waste (excluding trees or yard waste) in large bins that will be placed at the Arena (291 Brock St. W.) or the Seniors Centre (75 Marietta Dr.). These bins will be available on Tuesday, May 24, at 10 a.m.

Power Update

Many Hydro One and Elexicon customers in the Township remain without power. Both Utilities are providing updates on status on their websites and social media feeds. Extra-ordinary resources have been deployed to restore power as soon as possible.

Elexicon Energy Updates (Twitter = @elexiconenergy)
Hydro One Storm Centre Map (Twitter - @HydroOne)

Safety Tips During the Power Outage

- It is critical to stay at least 10 metres back from a fallen power line, even if it does not appear to be live. Do not walk or drive over any power lines.
- Stay home to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles.
- Turn off appliances, tools, light switches.
- Turn thermostat down to minimum to prevent damage of a power surge when power is restored.
- Don't open your fridge or freezer unless necessary. A freezer will keep food frozen for 24-36 hours.
- Never use charcoal or gas BBQ or home generators indoors.
- Use proper candle holders and extinguish all candles before going to sleep.
- Make sure your home has a working CO detector.

Safety Once Power Comes Back On

- Wait a few minutes before plugging anything back in as you could encounter power surges. Turn on essential appliances first and then gradually turn on other electronics.
- Check your fridge and freezer and ensure they are back online, and food has not spoiled.
- Reset all clocks, timers and alarms.
- Replace items you used from your emergency kit.
- Do not enter a flooded basement unless you are sure the power is disconnected.

Township Facilities Temporarily Closed

All facilities in the Township of Uxbridge are closed until further notice due to power outages. Residents who wish to speak to Township staff can call 905-852-9181 and leave a message. Staff working remotely will pick up messages and respond as quickly as possible.

In addition, several Township facilities were damaged in the storm. The Historic Centre and Arena will be closed to the public until further notice.

Unsafe Buildings Due to Storm

As a result of our recent severe weather Building Inspectors have been assessing damaged buildings, and the Chief Building Official will be posting Orders as required.

If a building has a posted 'Order Prohibiting Occupancy', the building must not be occupied until the Order has been rescinded.

Alternatively, an 'Unsafe Order' may be issued to notify the owner that remedial work to the building is required; however, the structure is in no immediate danger to occupants.

Recipients of either of these orders may contact Michael Klose, Chief Building Official at 416-427-8660.

Our two cents

The story we wish we didn't have

News organizations love big stories, big scoops, big news events. The *Cosmos* is always longing for them. Now we wish we hadn't.

The storm that ripped through our town on Saturday afternoon left most of us without electricity and connectivity - our worst nightmares realized. The *Cosmos* publisher initially laughed off any notion of putting together a "special edition" of a paper, thinking it might be too sensationalist for such a dire situation. That laughter soon dissipated when it became apparent that we were likely the only way that many people would get the important information that the township has to distribute to residents. So here we are, moving mountains to publish AND distribute on a Tuesday.

With the internet down because of widespread power outages, and cell phone service still only sometimes available, all tied up with the fact that it was a holiday weekend, reaching certain officials and organizations for updates on the situation has proven to be an exercise in futility. There is a lot of practical information in this paper, but there are still many, many questions to be asked and answered, which the *Cosmos* will do over the next few weeks. And please note - all the information that is in here is what is known at this moment in time - by the time this actually reaches hands, that information may have changed.

We would like to thank McDonald's Uxbridge for allowing Roger Varley to occupy a table in order to write and file his stories. We thank the township for their offer of coordinating available township staff and local service organizations to help with the distribution of this newspaper. Thank you to Susan Gallé for giving up her holiday Monday to go full out on design and ads. Thanks to John Cavers and Conrad Boyce for braving the streets mere moments after the storm to capture photos. And a huge thank you to Highview Holsteins and their spiffy new barn on the hill - the cows need to be milked, and while that was happening, our editor milked the generator in order for this paper to be assembled.

We've got this, Uxbridge. We're coming together like no town has before, and we'll emerge even more beautiful that we were before. Stay strong.

When one of these disappears, A LOT disappears.

Support our local businesses so they can support The Cosmos.

Because without them, we can't continue to deliver the news you want and need.

Your Universe

The Uxbridge Cosmos

9,500 copies of The Cosmos are published each Thursday in the Township of Uxbridge; 8,800 delivered by mail, 700 available in stores and boxes.

Publisher/Editor: Lisha Van Nieuwenhove 905-852-1900
Advertising/Sales: 905-852-1900

38 Toronto Street North, Unit One, Uxbridge Ontario L9P 1E6
E-mail: Lvann@thecosmos.ca Web site: Thecosmos.ca

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Friday to 4 p.m.

EDITORIAL POLICY: Opinions expressed by columnists, contributors and in letters to the editor are not necessarily those of The Cosmos. Letters must be signed and the telephone number provided (number will not be published). Requests that a name be withheld will be honoured only if there is a compelling reason. Errors brought to our attention will be corrected. The Cosmos reserves the right to edit and/or refuse to publish unsolicited material. **ADVERTISING POLICY:** The Cosmos reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. The Cosmos is not liable for slight changes or typographical errors in advertisements or any other errors or omissions in advertisements. All material herein, including advertising design, is copyrighted, and may not be reproduced in any form without permission.



Letters to the Editor

My family and I moved to Uxbridge three weeks before COVID. We don't know anyone and did not have many opportunities to meet people. My husband and I are both essential workers (he is in transit and I work in healthcare).

(During the recent storm) we had a tree fall in our yard and it broke our door down to the basement. We have no power and no supports around here.

I want to tell you about a couple from Leaskdale, Kim and Steve, who live on Scott Court. They did not know us, never met us. They walked by our home and saw us working to repair damage. They offered us a place to stay that had power. They, without hesitation, let us into their home!

We went and showered and did a load of laundry. We needed this more than any-

thing so we could regroup and plan our next steps.

I would like to publicly acknowledge these people - it would mean the world to us. There is nothing we can do to truly extend our gratefulness to this couple. I really think their kind hearts and sense of community should be celebrated.

*Kristin & Josh Garrity
Leaskdale*

Candidates Forum

Did you miss the May 11 Forum?

Watch it on YouTube at

<https://youtu.be/BBiaeBfBzbe>



Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

An overwhelming sense of sadness

Having been in the newspaper business for 65 years, I've helped cover a number of gut-wrenching stories over the years, from mining disasters to the desolation of Niagara's Love Canal neighbourhood to the horrific murder of a young girl in Toronto. But in all those years, I have rarely been overcome with such an overwhelming sense of sadness such as enveloped me on Saturday and Sunday as I wandered through the rubble of what a few hours earlier was a quiet, peaceful rural town.

Anything I might say in this column will likely be inadequate. Looking at the devastation caused by a brief but powerful storm brought me close to tears, a tough admission for a cynical, hard-nosed reporter to make. But how does that compare with the tears and misery faced by those most severely affected?

Watching people struggling to remove their belongings from an apartment building on Spruce Street left me feeling useless. Seeing people sifting through what remained of their homes had me wishing I could make it all right for them while knowing there was nothing I could do.

When approaching township officials or police officers, I made it clear right from the get-go that I did not want to be a hindrance. I recognized they had a job to do and I didn't want to get in the way.

That said, when there as an opportunity to talk to them and ask questions, they all responded courteously and to the best of their ability given the circumstances. Many people deserve our heartfelt thanks for the response they made - and continue to make - to mitigate the tragedy as best they could, but I was particularly impressed with the response of Durham Region Police and their auxiliary police backup. They were courteous, helpful and compassionate in their dealings with people who were dazed and bewildered by the sudden turn of events thrust upon them. They did their best to keep people safe while, at the same time, recognizing that people needed to do certain things, such as removing belongings while surrounded by downed wires. During this crisis, DRPS truly lived up

to the motto: "To serve and protect."

But this is Uxbridge and so it was no surprise to see people rushing to help their neighbours clear up debris and cut fallen trees into pieces more easily handled. In fact, people with chainsaws were not only gods, they were godsends. And the true nature of Uxbridge shone through as, all over town, small knots of people gathered to trade stories, offer help, to commiserate and, on occasion, enjoy a laugh. To be able to elicit a laugh in the midst of grief is admirable. It shows us that, evidence notwithstanding, it's not the end of the world.

At times, however, it did seem like the end of the world. No power and, for those of us with landlines, no telephone service. No internet. Cell phone service spotty at best. In an attempt to find some relief, I drove to Port Perry and then Stouffville, but to no avail: they were without power as well. It seemed as though we were cut off from the rest of the world.

The cleanup of Uxbridge will take some considerable time: the memory of the storm will last considerably longer. And, despite the fact that the province and the region have offered assistance, it likely is going to cost all Uxbridge taxpayers. The arena is closed until further notice, a building at the museum was practically demolished. Fixing the arena and removing the demolished building will cost money, as will the extensive public works effort over the next few weeks to clear up the mess. The township does have a few contingency funds, but it is likely there will be expenses the last budget did not account for.

But that's a story for another time. Right now, the thing to focus on is the sterling efforts of township staff, hydro workers and first responders and all the other personnel working around the clock to return things back to normal.

Normal! There's that word again. It's times like these that make me wonder just what normal is and will we ever see it again? It seems to me perhaps the word needs a new definition for this ever-shifting times.

Tell me, am I wrong?



The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

Not quite Oz

About midday on Sunday morning, nearly 24 hours after the storm, a cluster of people came walking down Balsam Street North toward us. My wife and I were walking toward a wall of tree debris that was growing in front of our home. We must've looked like zombies dragging branches and brush to and fro. We suddenly realized the cluster of people was our three grandsons, our daughter and son-in-law. My grandson ran up and embraced me.

"Just wanted to hug you," he said.

"Me too," I said and for the first time in hours I felt human again.

A day into the aftermath of the windstorm, we'd had lots of conversations with our neighbours: experiencing the storm, if anybody got hurt, severity of the damage and when we might get power back. Around us lay the twisted wreckage of much of our town's celebrated greenbelt crown - snapped off spruces and pines, uprooted poplars, maples and birches - much of it three-quarters of a century old. Not a single mature tree up our street had escaped the wind burst - someone said meteorologists verified it was a F (Fujita Scale) Two tornado. But up until my grandson squeezed me, we'd all talked about the storm like some inanimate thing.

Then I heard Robert Gerrard on our battery-powered radio describe his experience from upstairs at his Second Wedge Brewing Company. "I heard the wind outside. I've never heard anything like that," he told CBC Radio. Then, he said he opened the door to see the roof gone and his outdoor beer garden torn to pieces. "It's the most shocking thing I've experienced. I'm feeling really muddled." I realized he'd captured a lot of what we all felt in our part of town - some physical shock, remorse at lost property and the realization it could have been worse.

The amber alert sounded on my phone about 1 o'clock Saturday as I drove home from errands. Looking to the darkening horizon to the west, I took the alarm seriously. Minutes later, when I pulled into our driveway, I did something I never do except in winter; I drove my car into the garage. The wind - yes, it sounded like an oncoming freight train - virtually pushed me through the front door of the house. I found our dog Jazz frantic with the noise, so grabbed him and ran for the basement. I took one last look

outside and saw everything in our backyard - chairs, tables, plants, tools - suddenly levitate and literally fly away. My mind flashed to Dorothy and Toto in the farmhouse hurtling to Oz. Rain then obscured the windows except for one thing. I saw the tallest, heaviest trees on our property come crashing through the garage where I'd just parked my car.

When I emerged from the basement and did like everybody else - shot stills for the insurance adjusters and some video for posterity - my wife and neighbours and I all began picking up pieces. As I say, we didn't talk much except about "the stuff" that was broken or gone. Then, a guy arrived from a few blocks away. Ken Freek had an armful of rubber tubs and tarps and a pleasant smile. "Don't know what you might need," he said, "but let us know if we can help." All weekend long we received similar notes, emails (when internet service allowed) and visits from friends and strangers offering immediate help.

By holiday Monday, Andrew Rossi, who works mostly repairing water-damaged homes, had agreed to bring his crew to cut apart and extricate the two 80-year-old basswood trees that had crushed my garage and car. I'd seen him wielding a chainsaw, the night before, cutting up downed trees that had fallen in our neighbour's yard. He wore safety gear, looked focused and strong. I asked if he'd help me extricate the basswoods from the garage. He came the next day. "I'd estimate that the two trees that hit your garage weighed about 10 tons," he said when the job was done.

We talked about the newest word in our storm lexicon - *derecho*, a line of fast-moving severe thunderstorms known as a mesoscale convective system. I'd never heard of it.

At one point, when Andrew Rossi and I both stopped to catch our breath on Monday, I asked where he was during the storm. He said he'd been on a date with his wife. He paused. His eyes welled up. He admitted how concerned he was for his loved ones and for those around him. He said the date ended and as soon as they arrived home, he grabbed his gear and started helping anybody who needed it.

"Moments like this make you realize what's important," he said. "Family..."

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Although most of the railway cars escaped unscathed, Uxbridge's historic train station sustained substantial damage inside and out. *Photo by Conrad Boyce*



Devastation at the York-Durham Heritage Railway yard. *Photo by John Cavers*



The Orange Hall at the Uxbridge Historical Centre, crushed by nearby trees. It was the only building at the site that sustained damage. *Photo by Conrad Boyce*



Still-full beer flights, poured only moments before the roof was torn off a portion of The Second Wedge Brewing Co. on Victoria St. *Photos by John Cavers*

The Moments After...

A major storm – some would say a tornado – disrupted last Saturday afternoon, tearing through the Township of Uxbridge. Appearing to first touch down on the west side of the town at the Uxbridge Historical Centre, then making its way across the valley through multiple residential neighbourhoods and wreaking havoc along the way, the storm left an indelible mark on what was only moments before a small town enjoying the first official long weekend of summertime.



Residents got to work immediately after the storm, cutting up trees and branches for clean up. Neighbours pitched in to help. *Photo by John Cavers*



Moments after the storm, people emerged to survey the damage wrought. *Photo by John Cavers*



Hydro poles along Brock St. E. snapped in two. *Photo by John Cavers*



The storm blew the roof off Trinity United Church on First Ave.; debris covers the altar. *Photo by Conrad Boyce*



Packing what they can into plastic bags, residents of this apartment building on Ash St. leave to seek shelter elsewhere. *Photo by Conrad Boyce*

...Resources and help available, continued from page 1

offers of assistance from residents and local businesses. He said those offers will be considered once the immediate recovery operations are in hand. He also said offers of assistance have come in from the Ontario government, the region and a number of neighbouring municipalities.

Premier Doug Ford toured some of the hardest hit areas of Uxbridge with Barton on Monday. Barton said the premier's visit was cut off after about an hour because of intense media scrutiny getting in the way. Nevertheless, while he was here, Barton relayed that the premier told him "he's here for us" and offered whatever resources the province could provide.

Also visiting the area were Pickering-Uxbridge MPP Peter Bethlen-

falvy and Regional Chair John Henry.

Barton said his initial contact with the premier came on Saturday but it was almost impossible to conduct a conversation because of poor cell phone connections. The mayor said when the emergency management team first met at the fire station on Saturday, the town was without any communications and "we were handcuffed." However, local resident Doug Williamson, who works in IT, came to the fire station and helped the team set up internet and communications connections by linking them with a StarLink satellite.

Asked if there are any problems the general public might not be cognizant of, Barton replied: "We don't know what we don't know yet."

Although the storm appeared to be widespread, leaving an estimated 320,000 in the province without power, Uxbridge was apparently the

hardest hit. The first building to be hit appeared to be the Orange Hall (also known as the Lodge Hall) at the Uxbridge Historical Centre, which was crushed by the storm. It then moved eastwards, damaging the arena to an extent that the facility is now closed for the foreseeable future.

The storm then moved through Glen Acres into the downtown area, smashing The Second Wedge Brewing Co., decimating the York Durham Heritage Railway yard, pulverizing apartment buildings and homes in the area, and then continued its devastation along Dominion Street into Barton Farms. Trinity United Church suffered a huge hole in its roof, with debris cascading down into the sanctuary on top of the altar. In front of the railway station, a car was flipped onto its roof and a pickup truck was blown over onto its side.

At least three apartment buildings just north of Brock Street West had their roofs torn off, leaving all three buildings uninhabitable for the tenants. It was at the railway station that Durham Regional Police set up a command post to co-ordinate police efforts. Police, aided by a contingent of auxiliary officers, checked every apartment to make sure everyone was out and every apartment was locked.

On Sunday, there was a steady stream of tenants removing articles from their apartments. Most said

they were finding temporary shelter with family or friends. For a small number who had nowhere else to go, Durham Region social services and the Red Cross operated a relief shelter, shuttled some to area hotels and provided other supports. **Anyone needing help from social services should call 905-666-6239, ext. 1751 or email ess@durham.ca**

Everywhere through the downtown area, the sound of chainsaws could be heard as people set to work clearing downed trees. In some areas, such as First Avenue and Dominion Street, it seemed at first as though it would be an impossible task. Wherever one went downtown in the immediate aftermath of the storm, people looked dazed and confused, trying to take in the wholesale destruction around them.

Building inspectors from the township and neighbouring municipalities checked all severely damaged buildings. Preliminary numbers indicate 36 properties were issued with orders to repair the structures, while a few were deemed unsafe for occupancy. Those buildings which



A homeowner by the arena offers levity to situation. Photo by John Covers

suffered what was deemed to be less severe damage did not warrant building inspections.

With the loss of power, most residents also lost connection to the internet and cell phone service was spotty at times. Barton said restoring connectivity was one of the main priorities and noted that both Bell and Rogers had numerous technicians around town working to restore the internet and phone services. Because of the lack of internet and the unreliability of cell phone service, the *Cosmos* was allowed by McDonald's to use its WiFi system to prepare its reports.

For most of Saturday and Sunday, the only stores open for business in the urban area were Zehrs and Canadian Tire, which operated a limited walk-up service for customers. The lineup for coffee at the Starbucks counter in Zehrs was daunting. Other businesses in the south end gradually began opening on Monday, even though it was a holiday.

But amidst all the devastation and tears, there were a few examples of good humour. One family, whose home had been severely damaged, took time out to enjoy pizza on what was left of their roof. Another homeowner posted a large sign on his front lawn: "Wood 4 Sale."

Throughout the weekend, people gathered at the hardest hit areas to share stories, commiserate with home owners and offer help.

Was it a tornado? We're still not sure

by Roger Varley

As of press time today, there has been no official declaration that Saturday's storm in downtown Uxbridge was a tornado. That decision apparently has to be made by some meteorologist with Environment Canada.

So, what makes a tornado a tornado? According to The Weather Network, a tornado is a violently rotating column of air, in contact with the ground and often (but not always) visible as a funnel cloud. For a vortex to be classified as a tornado, it must be in contact with both the ground and the cloud base.

There are other weather phenomena that can be just as destructive as a tornado, including microbursts. A microburst usually occurs during a thunderstorm or heavy rain shower and often is relatively short-lived. It also dissipates as quickly as it arrived.

However, a term new to most of us, has also emerged: a *derecho*. A *derecho* (which is Spanish for "straight") is described as "a line of intense, widespread and fast-moving windstorms

and sometimes thunderstorms that moves across a great distance and is characterized by damaging winds." Some weather experts are suggesting

it was a *derecho* that roared through the province.

The difference is most likely moot to those residents whose homes suf-

fered substantial damage during the brief outburst. As far as the *Cosmos* could determine at press time, whether a storm is classified as a tor-

nado or not, it should not affect people's ability to make a claim on their home insurance.

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Important information in response to storm

The Regional Municipality of Durham is sharing important information for residents affected by the recent storm, including road closures, food safety tips, well water safety, and the safe disposal of yard waste at the Waste Management Facilities (WMFs).

Health information:

Food safety

For residents whose refrigerators were impacted due to power outages, ensure that any food above 4 degrees Celsius is discarded. When in doubt, throw it out. More information is available on the Durham Region Health Department Food safety page and on the Government of Canada's Food safety in an emergency page.

Flooding and drinking water

If the water in your well was affected by flooding, stop using the water from your home immediately. Test your well water first before using. Do not use the water, even if you have a disinfection system. Learn more on the Durham Region Health Department's Flooding page.

Well water

Well water can become contaminated after extreme weather and flooding. Ensure your well water is safe during and after emergencies on the Government of Canada's Be Well Aware page.

General well water information

Residents with private wells can get more information about well water maintenance and safety on the Durham Region Health Department's Private wells page.

Storm debris disposal:

Waste Management Facilities (WMFs)

To support residents in the safe disposal of debris caused by the storm, Durham Region's WMFs will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. as of Tuesday, May 24 until Saturday, May 28.

Leaf and yard waste

Waste Management Facilities will also accept any leaf and yard waste that is dropped off over the next two weeks (until June 6 unless otherwise extended). Additionally, the typical fee for Durham Region residents using the WMFs will be waived for leaf and yard waste to support the storm recovery. Learn more about WMFs at durham.ca/WMF.

Residents in Town of Ajax, Municipality of Clarington, City of Pickering and the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge can also take advantage of their curbside leaf and yard waste curb-side collection on their scheduled collection date.

For more information

For the most up-to-date information on power outages and planned restoration times, refer to the Elexicon, Oshawa Power, and Hydro One outage websites.

For the latest news and updates on service disruptions, please follow the Region of Durham on Twitter and Facebook, or visit our website at durham.ca.

If you were affected by the storm and need help, you can apply for financial assistance through The Regional Municipality of Durham. This includes money for food replacement and, in exceptional circumstances, help with medication, medical supplies or personal care.

Not all residents will be eligible for assistance. The aid is through Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. It is meant for those who don't have enough money for food and housing, have a disability, or are in financial need.

Visit the Social Assistance page on Ontario.ca or call 1-888-999-1142 to apply.

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Conservation areas affected by storm closed until further notice

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has announced that several areas of the region are closed for clean up.

The weather system that swept through Southern Ontario on Saturday afternoon has resulted in significant tree damage in a number of conservation areas in the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) watershed.

As a result, we have closed the following conservation areas to the public effective immediately:

- Durham Region Forest - all tracts
- Pangman Springs (Kennedy Road entrance)
- Whitchurch
- Thornton Bales

The LSRCA asks that people stay away from these locations until further notice. It says it is working diligently on repairs which include the use of heavy equipment and chain saws - it is important the public stays away for its own safety and to allow the LSRCA to do this work.

"We know how important these natural areas are to residents and will do our best to get them open, but safety is our priority at this time," said Sue Jagminas, senior communications advisor for the LSRCA.

Updates will be provided on social media when they become available.



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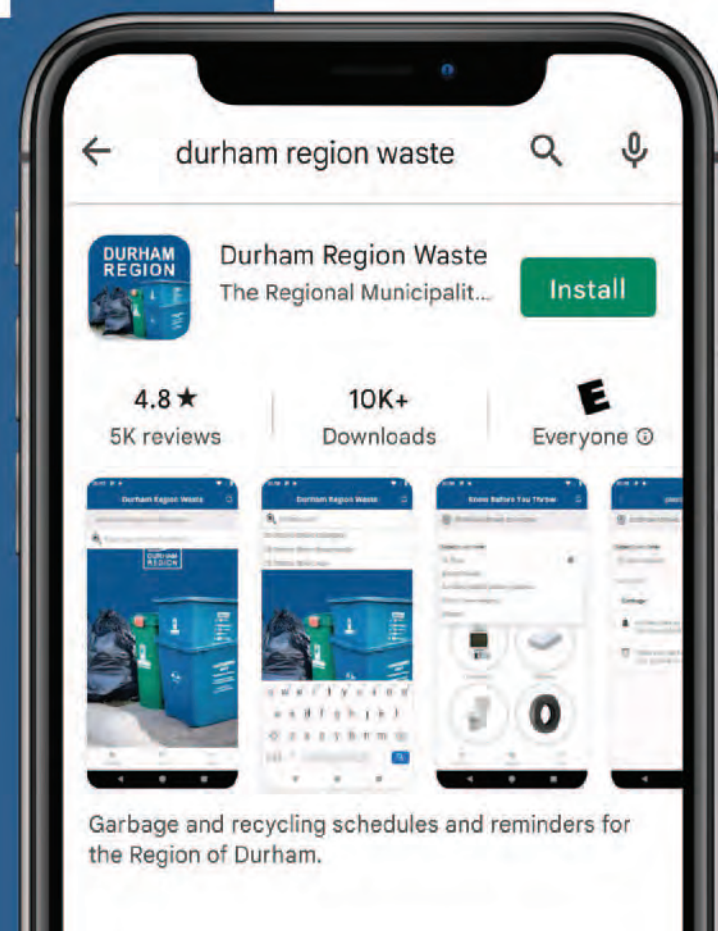
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Uxbridge's response to an EF-2 tornado



The intensity of the storm lasted less than two minutes, but left 16 kilometres of total devastation behind. Large trees, power lines, and hydro poles lay across the roads, paralyzing navigation. *Photo: Township of Uxbridge*

Just after 1 p.m. on May 21, an EF-2 tornado swept through the Township of Uxbridge, ON. With an approximate population of 22,000 residents and a land area of 420 square kilometres, the tornado left extensive property and infrastructure damage, months' worth of recovery, and rendered over 50 citizens homeless and at least 9,000 people without power.

The intensity of the storm lasted less than two minutes. The EF-2 tornado left 16 kilometres of total devastation, mainly in the heart of the downtown of Uxbridge. Large trees, power lines, and hydro poles lay across the roads, paralyzing navigation. Buildings were decimated, including a 134-year-old church. Windows were blown out, homes were lifted and collapsed, and roofs were caved in, but no one was killed or seriously injured. There was a moment of stillness as the community took in the devastation.

Neighbours checked on neighbours, and within minutes the silence was overtaken by an orchestra of chainsaws.

Immediate Challenges and Innovative Solutions

Township staff mobilized. The mayor and CAO declared a state of emergency. The Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) at the local fire hall was established. An emergency hotline was set up and staffed around the clock. With many team members out of town for the long weekend, staffing was limited. Without hesitation, the staff available assumed the necessary roles within the township's emergency plan, working around the clock to respond and to serve the community. Mutual aid from neighbouring municipalities became essential.

A team of over 30 Durham Region Police Service and Auxiliary staff provided road safety blocks and assisted with securing key areas. A mobile command

station was deployed in the heart of the hardest hit area.

Building safety was a top priority. Offers of support from neighbouring municipalities flooded in, and resources were secured from the Municipality of Georgina. A third-party consultant assisted with building assessments. This crew, alongside the fire department, went house to house, inspecting and issuing orders to ensure no one was residing in a space no longer fit for occupancy. The team worked late into the night, ensuring every affected building was inspected. Of course, this rendered a number of residents temporarily homeless.

Working with the Region of Durham Social Services and Transit teams, a reception centre was established in a community building where power remained. Within hours, the reception centre was open for community members to access food, water, washroom facilities, and a safe place to sleep for the night. Red Cross offered essential support, providing hotel accommodations for those in need.

The storm knocked out power across the region, and Uxbridge was later declared to be hit the hardest across the province. A few hours after the storm, internet and telecommunications became unstable, likely as universal power supplies (battery back-ups) to key infrastructure failed. The EOC had committed to sending the province



Kristi Honey (khoney@uxbridge.ca) is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Township of Uxbridge.



Sierra Miller (smiller@uxbridge.ca) is a fourth year Criminal Justice and Public Policy Student at the University of Guelph and Student Communications Coordinator for the Township of Uxbridge.



Photo: Township of Uxbridge

hourly updates, and by the evening that became nearly impossible with internet and cell towers no longer available. Communications became a key frustration. The EOC reached out to various internet service providers, seeking a cellular on wheels to restore connectivity. The mayor also reached out to a local resident expert in telecommunications, who offered his personal satellite internet. Twenty minutes later, the EOC was equipped with lightning fast, stable, and secure connectivity.

Extended Challenges and Helping Hands

Prolonged obstacles continued to persist in the days following. The community and township staff rallied together, continuing to clear trees from streets and properties while local utilities erected new hydro poles and restored electricity. Insurance adjusters flooded the streets, supporting businesses and homes to stabilize and secure facilities while repairs and restoration work could be planned and scheduled.

While the township had stable and reliable internet, it became clear post-storm that getting information out to residents would be a challenge. Many were without power or internet, so getting key messages into the hands of the community became essential. Large posters were printed with key messages and posted on township facilities and post office boxes across the community.

By-law officers distributed information and were out in the community to answer questions. But more needed to be done to provide critical details.

The CAO and mayor called Lisha Van Nieuwenhove, owner and editor of COSMOS, a local community newspaper. The newspaper produced a special early edition for residents that was distributed by teams of volunteers and service groups, as Canada Post remained closed. This was a huge feat and was wildly successful – getting key messages into the hands of the entire community ensured that everyone was aware of the services and supports available, of collection plans, placement of waste bins, and where to go for help.

The township worked with the region's Works Department to deploy large waste bins in a number of central locations for residents to dump broken and destroyed furniture, shingles, and metal, as well as schedule additional waste pick-ups. Brush pick up began and would continue for weeks following.

Power wasn't fully restored to all areas for 10 days. Neighbourhood barbecues were held, and the recreation centre was open for warm showers. Durham Region Social Services deployed additional support resources in the library, offering housing support and assisting with food security issues and counselling.

The Township of Uxbridge was offered support by Team Rubicon, a non-profit disaster relief team mainly comprised

of retired military and first responders. Team Rubicon spent three weeks in Uxbridge, travelling to various properties to aid residents in storm recovery. The local church billeted the team of resources, providing shelter and food while the team worked tirelessly across the community. The support from these organizations was tremendously valuable to Uxbridge's recovery.

Long-Term Challenges and Continued Commitment

While debris was cleared and a sense of normalcy returned, Uxbridge continues to experience long-term challenges from the storm. A prominent, ongoing issue remains with the displaced residents. The majority of these residents derived from three apartments that were deemed unsafe for occupancy. While temporary housing accommodations were secured at the local college, long-term solutions remain challenging due to the lack of affordable housing region-wide.

The township continues the ongoing effort of rebuilding and restoring multiple historic municipal properties. The Uxbridge Historical Centre experienced the loss of their oldest building, the Victoria Corners Lodge Hall. The building is designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and staff continue to determine the best course of action for rebuilding.

A lessons learned post-emergency allows for reflection on future emergency preparedness and resiliency. Discussions and planning are underway for generators, satellite internet and communications redundancy, and future reception centres (emergency evacuation centres).

For now, the Township of Uxbridge persists with their efforts toward addressing these hurdles while recognizing the triumphs achieved throughout the emergency. In the end, the township was hit with big devastation and lived to tell the tale. The dedicated work of township staff, quick and innovative problem solving, and endless offers of support are the reasons Uxbridge can look back on the event so proudly. **MW**