

STAFF REPORT

Report #CAO2006-25

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jeff Carswell, Chief Administrative Officer
Re: Tavistock Flooding – Public Meeting
Date: July 27, 2006

Background:

During the Public Meeting, staff recorded notes and comments from residents. Some of the comments were not of a nature that could be acted on (work should be started sooner, why has it taken so long, comments about the water table, etc.) There were, however; some comments and questions that would be appropriate for Council to further consider and discuss. Following is my summary of these items. There are no doubt other items that may warrant further Council consideration.

Discussion:

Proactively contact and visit every household in Tavistock to determine whether they were affected.

While this would likely provide a large amount of information to the Township, the time to complete a proper visit and investigation would be enormous. To be of value, the visits must be carried out by appropriate personnel. There is also the concern that some people may not wish to disclose whether they have had water damage.

Insurance – There are many conflicting stories about insurance.

It may be appropriate for the Township to approach local insurance companies and inform them of the work the Township has done and is doing to minimize the risk of flooding. I also believe they need to have a very good understanding of what it means when a property disconnects and isolates their house from the storm system. The Township would also benefit from having a better understanding the insurance coverage being provided to homes in Tavistock.

Semi's – not protected unless both sides disconnect and ensure proper grading

This is a difficult situation and must be worked out by the owners. In addition to water damage, owners of semi's and other types of multiple dwelling structures are exposed to many risks that are not associated with single detached dwellings. Other risks include fire, illegal activity, mould, noise, smoke, etc.

Some people want to disconnect, but cannot afford to. Options for loans to be repaid with taxes.

Staff are investigating this matter and will have information for the meeting. The Township may be able to develop a loan program with repayment to be made with property taxes. Until a program proposal is developed, uptake and cost of the program would be difficult to determine.

Impact of additional development / development freeze

This matter has been raised several times in the past. Council could try to implement a development freeze, but depending on how extensive it is, it may be challenged and costly to defend. There is also the argument that development in some areas would be beneficial as the drainage would have to be controlled through storm water management and this could provide benefits to other areas of town. There is also the financial benefit that this work would be at the developers cost.

Provincial Funding / Disaster Funding

Township staff are always watching for programs and funding opportunities. The Township has applied for COMRIF twice and has not been successful. While the flooding problems in Tavistock are significant and serious, they have been just a “blip” on the provincial radar. The Township could have declared an emergency, but doing so is typically done when municipal resources are extended beyond capacity, volunteers are utilized, there is an evacuation, etc. I have attached a summary of the Peterborough flood in 2004. While not trying to take away from the seriousness of the Tavistock Floods, many of the elements of a “disaster” or “emergency” have not been present in the past flooding events in the Tavistock.

Staff were in contact with Ministry officials following the flood to discuss options and advise of the situation. Ministry staff were supportive, but since many of the elements of a disaster were not present and the Township and County resources could handle the work to be done, the Ministry or other agencies could not be called upon. Additional information of the Provincial Disaster Relief Fund can be found at:

http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_3365_1.html

Tavistock Flood Prevention Working Group
Next Meeting, modified mandate for the group?

Recommendation:

1. Council provide direction to staff on additional activities, investigations or programs it wishes to further consider or implement.

Report prepared
and submitted by:



Jeff Carswell, AMCT
Chief Administrative Officer

Direction from Council

Staff Report re July 25, 2006 Public Meeting in Tavistock

Council discussed the Public Meeting held recently in Tavistock regarding flooding in conjunction with a staff report prepared by C.A.O. Jeff Carswell.

Council requested that staff investigate an interest free loan program for ratepayers unable to afford the cost of the disconnects.

Dates for subsequent Flood Prevention Working Group meetings were established - September 19; October 17 and November 21, with all meetings to be held at the Tavistock & District Recreation Centre. •

Copied from:

**[http://www.emergency-management.ca/
city_of_peterborough_flood_2004.htm](http://www.emergency-management.ca/city_of_peterborough_flood_2004.htm)**

City of Peterborough Flood 2004

On July 15, 2004, the City of Peterborough and surrounding areas experienced a record rainfall: “Observers at the Trent University weather station recorded a whopping 409 mm of rain in July, smashing the total precipitation for any month of the year. The volume of water proved too much for Peterborough’s drains and sewers, some of them built a century ago. However, few cities in North America could have handled the phenomenal 14 billion litres of water that splashed on Peterborough in under five hours. That’s enough water to flow over Niagara Falls in about 40 minutes or to fill almost nine SkyDomes.”¹

Highlights of the Impact

As with all emergencies, this story is one of numbers—numbers of people affected, staff and volunteers involved, hours invested, and cost. Thousands of homes and businesses had been filled with six to eight feet of water and/or sewage; 500 had hydrometers pulled because of flooded basements. In total, 1,868 basements needed to be pumped out, and there were about 1,000 gas disconnections.

One hundred and seventy-one long-term care residents were evacuated, only 30 of whom were able to walk from their three-storey building. An additional 140 residents and 150 volunteers were housed for a cost of approximately \$5,000 to \$7,000 per day.

Public Works coordinated 80 Toronto garbage-packer trucks and 90 tractor-trailer dump trucks, along with the equipment and manpower that went with it. Approximately 12,500 metric tons of garbage were placed in the landfill from July 16 to 27. The normal amount for that time period is generally 3,000 metric tons.

The public inquiry centre was activated approximately one hour after the emergency operations centre

(EOC) was operational. Fifty-three staff members provided 1,453 person-hours to deal with approximately 13,000 calls up to August 3, after which a further 2,500 calls were handled by the intake screening unit.

The volunteer command centre involved 503 volunteers over 12 days, who provided approximately 8,400 total person-hours pumping basements, cleaning out houses, and helping to clear city streets. Volunteers came from 28 fire departments from across Ontario (including departments in Peterborough County), Mennonite Disaster Services, Buddhist Monk Organization, two community colleges, Amateur Radio Emergency Services, Auxiliary Coast Guard, Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team, and Toronto Fire.

Evacuation centres lodged over 100 volunteers during the course of the emergency. In partnership with the Red Cross, they provided more than 4,000 household cleaning kits and 500 personal care kits. In addition, they issued emergency clothing to over 1,300 people and emergency food to better than 1,000 households. Volunteers also implemented a home assessment program with the Red Cross that provided at least 600 home visits, and they served about 10,000 meals in partnership with Salvation Army. In all, 3,900 Ontario Disaster Relief final claims were filed.

Lessons Learned

Things to prepare before an event occurs:

1. Have agreements ready with a local hotel(s) about “blocks” of rooms available for visiting politicians and emergency crews.
2. Have agreements or an account set up with food service and hardware stores before an event. Ensure that you have after-hour contacts and payment arrangements detailed.
3. Work out agreements with neighbours near and far to share and cross-train staff in the event of an emergency.
4. Have an account set up for monetary donations *before* an emergency occurs. And determine whether you will or won't be accepting donated items. What do you need? Remember that you will have to have a space and a team available to manage the items.
5. Have maps stored and available for use—volunteers and responders may not be familiar with your area.

Once an emergency has occurred, keep the following in mind:

1. Ask the province *early* for what you may need later on. Anything you receive from the province will require local resources to implement or administer.
2. Track everything—every decision and every cost! You will need the information later. In some cases, only the costs outside of your normal operating costs will be covered by disaster funding; for example, the cost of your own public works crews fixing infrastructure damaged in an emergency may not be covered, but expenses to bring in an outside agency may be compensated. Get clarification as soon as possible.
3. Staff need to know up front how their needs will be addressed. Time off, salary, and overtime should be figured out in advance. Take care of your emergency control group and public inquiry staff; ensure you have systems set up to provide for healthy meals and reasonable shifts.
4. Have in-depth conversations with every organization named in your plan to be *very clear* on the expectations, the scope of service to be provided, and the cost. A clear policy must be communicated detailing the level and types of service and support being provided to the citizens during the event.
5. When using volunteers, you must control the amount and qualifications of the external help you utilize. Be *very specific* about the resources you need. If what you are offered is not the number of bodies with the expertise and equipment you need, do not accept the offer. However, be sure to explain why you are saying no to the help.
6. You must communicate clearly with volunteers and provide all policy direction in writing to the leaders of the groups. Note that different volunteer groups may have unique requirements and you need to be sensitive to their specific needs and how to best recognize their efforts.
7. Open a large evacuation centre rather than a number of small centres. It is easier to transport evacuees than to stretch your staff over multiple sites.
8. Make sure food and showers are available so that people that can remain in their homes don't have to live in an evacuation centres.
9. Have counselling services available at evacuation and public inquiry centres.
10. Have visible security in place at both evacuation centres and EOCs. Ensure that access points to both are controlled.

11. Don't forget to communicate with your "unaffected" departments. They may not be as unaffected as you think, and they may have information relevant to managing an emergency.

As the events wrap up:

1. Plan to roll out emergency information quickly, such as statistics, stories, pictures, next steps, what went right, what went wrong, and long-term plans.
2. Be prepared to have a public inquiry centre open for weeks after the event is thought to be over to service the public through the recovery phase of the emergency.
3. Debrief the staff and volunteers right away. Allow an opportunity for the public to state their opinions and views as well.
4. Be prepared for some transition issues for staff when your emergency is over, in addition to concerns of potential critical incident stress. You will need to recognize that going back to "business as usual" can be anticlimactic and may have some impact.

The lessons presented here are just some of those we learned in Peterborough—we are still learning! One of the most important things we learned is that people are your most valuable resource. Treat them well.

We could not have managed the emergency as well as we did without the incredible dedication of our staff and volunteers. Thank you!