

Winter roads hazards have yet to end

Dufferin County's state of emergency has ended but Old Man Winter hasn't loosened his grip just yet.

On Wednesday morning, Orangeville real estate agent Cindy Williams warned on Facebook that she had driven from Shelburne to Orangeville, and it felt like her car was hydroplaning all the way.

And, on Wednesday afternoon, the Ministry of Transport, among other highway reports, said that Highway 9 between Orangeville and former Highway 50 was "partly ice covered with snow covered, partly snow covered sections." The highway conditions were poor, and visibility was only fair, MTO said.

Dufferin County Emergency Operations Centre was implemented during the start of the major storm on Jan. 23-24, but the state of emergency wasn't formally called until the 28th. The Centre continued on a 24-hour basis until the emergency ended.

During the emergency, the county was assisted not only by the lower tier municipalities but also by the surrounding counties of Simcoe and Grey and the Region of York, all of which had similar problems of their own.

The storm had literally blanketed six southern Ontario counties at the height of its fury. At the beginning in Dufferin, it had stranded more than 400 motorists - many of whom had abandoned their vehicles at roadsides and in ditches.

Although there is no longer an emergency state, driving is not entirely safe. Roadside snow banks in places are reported as being more than eight feet high, and the OPP is continuing to warn motorists to slow down and watch for snowmobilers and others while the combination of slippery roads and poor visibility remains.

During the time that motorists were stranded at Shelburne and Honeywood, town and county staff along with volunteers, Red Cross and St. John Ambulance, as well as staff at Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex and Honeywood Fire Department, provided cots, food and blankets.

The Dufferin County situation attracted mainstream media such as CBC and CTV and Global, Shelburne CAO John Telfer reported to his council.

Costs of the storm have yet to be compiled.

By Wes Keller