

LOCAL NEWS

# Cramahe businesses ride out power outage

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He heard from every one of the full- and part-time staff, all offering to come in and help out, do whatever was required to serve the customers.

"I'm really, really pleased about that. I think that says a lot about our staff, about us," Brice said Monday.

Monday morning, the Mill Valley Water truck was making yet another drop-off. Doug Clement and assistant of jugs and containers of water, scooping up the

empty jug returns.

"We've been very busy, going non-stop," Doug Clement of Mill Valley said. "We didn't deliver at night, though," he says of the blackout period. A State of Emergency was declared by the Provincial government requesting vehicles remain off the roads.

August 15 was a Thursday, and, as anyone who knows Colborne at all will tell you, that means Wing Night at the Queen's Hotel.

With candles on the patio and

interior lounge tables, Liz and Tim Gilligan opted to proceed with tradition - power or no power.

"It was beer in bottles only," waitress Tara Cowles said. "There was no draft or Guinness because the taps weren't working, but we had pop in cans and beer in bottles. And we served wings!" There were no fries, though.

"It was actually kind of romantic in here," Tara says, "with the candlelight. And the (outdoor) patio was fairly busy."

Wing night ended a few hours early - at 11 p.m.

As the realization the the August 15 power outage was not just a local occurrence, John Fox of Fox's IGA prepared for the long-haul.

"John rented two registration units - reefers," Cindy Greer says. "When we closed Thursday, we moved all the dairy, meats, produce and frozen goods into the trucks."

That meant goods had to be moved back onto the shelves for Friday's business.

"Because we weren't sure there wouldn't be rolling blackouts, it all had to be moved mack into the reefers," Cindy noted. "It took us till midnight Friday night."

And back out again for Saturday's business.

"It took us toll 10 a.m. Saturday to get the entire system working again," Cindy says of the electronic payment systems and the in-store stocking.

"It was a lot of work - but it was worth it. Everybody (full and part time staff) came in to help. We didn't lose a thing.

"It was ingenious on John's part to get the reefers."

At Mr. Convenience, Terry, Jenn and employees immediately began their accounting procedures on battery-powered calculators. The store remained open for the surge of customers coming in to buy batteries, water and bread supplies in particular.

"We're all sold out of C and D batteries. People were buying

From 4:30 to 6 p.m. closing time Thursday, "were were quite busy. Not at first, but as more and more people realized what was happening, they came in. We're sold out of any battery operated radios we had, too.

"At the front counter, they only thing we couldn't do was take Interact. We were doing Visa and charge cards manually, using calculators and writing the bills up manually."

With a gas-powered oven, Village Pizza was able to prepare pizzas for hungry customers. Submarine sandwiches were also on offer. As the heat continued to rise in the restaurant, Pam and Geoff Martin worked on with staff until 7:30 p.m. By then, it was impossible to prepare the dough for pizzas without electrical mixing machines, and the heat was causing the dough to rise too quickly.

The Colborne Post Office remained open regular business hours all last week, including Saturday morning. Elsewhere in Ontario, post offices were closed but the Colborne staff regard the post office as an essential part of the community: the post office opened.

On Monday, August 18, Post Office interior lights and air conditioning were off as an energy-saving contribution.

Viv and Gilles Bleau were doing dishes and winding up their day at the Yum Yum Bake shop and cafe on King Street East in Colborne when the power outage hit Thursday.

"I just decided I'd put al my ice cream into the back freezer right then for some reason," Viv says. "A few hours later, I put in all my milks and creamers, too."

However, when the power came back on shortly after 1 a.m., Viv and Gilles came in and threw out all the foodstuffs in a front cooler and reefer.

"I lost all my meats" for the Friday breakfast and lunch crowd. "But my staff"

runs out of town to obtain some wholesale supplies to see the business through.

Fred Drehlich had just closed up Cliffcrest Jewellers shortly after 4 p.m. Chatting with a last customer, the lights went out.

Castleton General Store closed earlier than usual Thursday evening. "It didn't affect us too badly other than we had to close the store," owner Keith Olan reports. "There was a little bit of business loss."

Summer months, Castleton General Store is an ice cream destination. Customers travel distances with an ice cream cone from the Castleton General Store as the primary objective. Keith and staff quickly set their contingency plan in place to save the ice cream stocks.

"With our walk-in freezer, we took all perishable items - like ice cream - closed it in the freezer and shut the door."

As power outages go, last week's nine-hour stretch was hardly the worst the retail business has experienced, Mr. Olan notes.

"We've had worse power outages in the past, for ice storms. This time, it was actually minima," he says.

The store had a sales run on "batteries, water, things like that; bread, butter, margarine - things like that that people need to tide them over," Keith observes. "I think people were somewhat afraid of the blackouts they thought would happen after."

For a retail businessés, handling power outages is just part of job, Mr. Olan says.

"Retailers worry. This sort of thing can happen any time. It's just another blip in our lives," he says philosophically.

"I went to check the (electrical) breakers and then noticed the lights were out everywhere," Fred says. He locked up and left for home. The power returned just after 1 a.m. Friday, August 15, so he reopened for business

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