

Georgetown's Duthie soars as a guest of the Snowbirds

Lori Duthie has been volunteering at the Canadian International Air Show for the past 22 years and was rewarded for her dedication recently with a special invitation.

Duthie was selected to take flight with the Canadian Forces Snowbirds on Sept. 1, which in itself is a rare honour, as a show of appreciation for her support of the team over the past two decades.

But the icing on the cake for Duthie was being part of an historical flight involving the eight Snowbirds, Switzerland's Breitling Jets team and a CF18 for their first-ever formation flight

together.

I have watched the Snowbirds perform every year since I was five at the Canadian International Air Show in Toronto and am just as impressed each and everytime I see them perform, said Duthie, who is in the process of earning her private pilot's licence through the Brampton Flying Club.

Most little girls dreamed of their wedding days, but for me I always dreamed of flying with the Snowbirds. After volunteering in the Air Show industry for more than 20 years I was thrilled that my dream came true.



Georgetown native Lori Duthie was selected to take flight with the Canadian Forces Snowbirds on Sept. 1 as a show of appreciation for her support of the team over the past two decades.

Submitted photo

Rising hydro bills are continuing to shock residents

By Joel OpHardt
Metroland Media Group

Ornella Montini has tried installing LED lights, reducing her air conditioning use, hang drying her laundry, and using electricity when prices are cheapest but nothing seems to stop the rise of her hydro bill.

She has seen her home's monthly electricity bill rise from about \$120 to more than \$300 in the last five years with Burlington Hydro.

How do you justify that kind of money? asked Montini.

In an effort to combat negative reactions from rising electricity prices, the Liberal government announced Monday it would be cutting the province's eight-per-cent share of HST on power bills. Nine months ago, the province eliminated a 10-per-cent reduction on electricity bills in the form of the Clean Energy Benefit program.

The change will mean an aver-

age annual saving of about \$130 for urban hydro users and \$540 for rural.

Montini is skeptical that the tax break will negate price increases.

They are going to keep raising the prices anyways, she said.

The cost of electricity at Montini's hair salon Ornella Barber and Hair Styling means she's now paying \$600 in overages at the end of the year to bridge what's not covered by her rent. When she started her business five years ago, her electricity usage was completely covered.

Mom and pop shops are having a hard time making a living I'm making a loss, said Montini.

Montini is now reducing her grocery spending.

Now, I do what I actually need, not what I want, said Montini. She has switched to eating more veggies, and even freezing cabbage while they're cheap to save money in the winter.

Robert and Charlotte Field of

Simcoe have been struggling to find where their money is going. They live in an 2,400 square foot bungalow with only two residents. Their home is of similar construction and size to surrounding homes, but they pay a Hydro One bill that's about twice as expensive as their neighbours.

Following recommendations from Hydro One, the retired couple installed more efficient bulbs, replaced their aging fridge and freezer, and replaced their power-sucking television. The couple follows time-of-use guidelines, their stove and water heater runs on gas, and they use a well for their water.

Charlotte says Hydro One has confirmed their meter is not an issue.

After all that work, their July hydro bill came in at \$372. The couple pays monthly.

It just boggles my mind, said Charlotte. They've got to be wrong.

Charlotte said a Hydro One ombudsman response to their inquiry stated that the elimination of the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, and increased rates likely caused the price of their bill to increase, despite their energy saving efforts.

Charlotte wasn't satisfied with the answer.

Why do they promote energy savings, if it doesn't get rid of high bills? asked Charlotte.

Hamiltonian Jim Warren is in a contract with a hydro retailer.

Even though he's locked in at a monthly rate, his global adjustment rate has been climbing.

The global adjustment fee has risen from about 3.5 c/kWh in the fall of 2010 to about 11.1 c/kWh on his April-May bill giving him a \$154.72 global adjustment fee on top of his \$82.38 bill.

It's impossible to understand how this is calculated. We're left in a position where we're simply being told what to pay, said Warren.

HOW MUCH HAVE RATES RISEN?

Rates are set by the Ontario Energy Board twice per year Nov. 1 and May 1. For most, prices are divided into off-peak, mid-peak, and on-peak rates, with off-peak being the cheapest.

In the last five years, off-peak prices have increased 47 per cent, mid-peak rates have risen 48 per cent, and on-peak prices have risen 67 per cent.

If you qualified for the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit program, you will also have lost the 10 per cent rebate effective Dec. 31, 2015. That loss will be offset by the province's eight-per-cent reduction of its share of HST on hydro bills.



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