

Storm wreaks havoc on Halton Hills

Falling trees a problem for Hydro crews

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

Halton Hills Hydro crews are making progress in restoring hydro to the thousands of customers affected by the weekend's ice storm, but as of Monday morning, many residents were still without power.

Art Skidmore, Halton Hills Hydro (HHH) President and CEO, estimated that 75 per cent of Georgetown customers didn't have hydro, but the good news was that most of Acton, which hadn't had power since Saturday night, had been reconnected, except for a couple of small areas.

"I expect we will see a lot of reconnecting happening today (Monday)," said Skidmore. He added that while hydro may be restored in an area, individual customers (most commonly in the rural area) may still not have power because a downed tree may have taken out the hydro line on their prop-

erty. Those customers should contact an electrician to deal with the issue, he said.

"Halton Hills got the worst of the storm," Skidmore said. "We got nailed."

The ice on the trees snapped branches off all across the town, many of them landing on or pulling down hydro wires as they fell. Skidmore said at least six hydro poles had been broken, but crews hadn't been able to get to those yet.

"The trees are our culprit," said Skidmore. "The ice was unbelievable."

Hydro crews have been working 16-hour rotating shifts and four private tree contractors have been brought in to help remove downed branches and trees.

With the trees still coated in ice, Skidmore thinks there will be more power problems arising from downed branches. He urges everyone to stay away from the trees.



The weekend storm left trees strewn across many streets in Halton Hills, like Jessop Court (above), making the roads nearly impassable.
Photo by Jon Borgstrom

"These branches are precarious. The trees could snap at anytime."

HHH sought help from other hydro companies, but no one is available as they're all out dealing with hydro outages in their own communities.

Skidmore said HHH's Customer Care Department at 519-853-3701 was staying open until 11 p.m. Monday, and they would continue to update social media.

He said crews are working as quickly as they can, but he understands that customers are frustrated.

"We thank everyone for their continued support. We know how difficult and stressful it is to be without power. We are moving as quickly and safely as we can," said Skidmore.

He urges people who don't have power and they're cold to go somewhere where they can get warm—malls, friends, relatives, or the warming centre located in Georgetown at Georgetown Police Station, 217 Guelph St.

Halton Police tweeted Monday that over the weekend only one person, an 87-year-old, visited the warming centre.

The ice storm has meant for "pretty much mayhem," said Michelle Lemme of Colonial Tree Service.

Lemme said the crews had been

working with hydro companies to remove branches from lines, and also for individual residents with downed trees.

"We're trying to deal with prioritized emergencies," said Lemme.

Halton Hills resident Jan Wareing is frustrated with the information she has received from Halton Hills Hydro during the outage, and believes the utility company and Mayor Rick Bonnette should have provided more information to radio stations.

She said after many calls she finally got through to Halton Hills Hydro Customer Care and was told she would be without power until Dec. 24 and no other information was provided.

While she understood the Mayor had been tweeting throughout, she said, "not everybody has a smart phone or an iPad."

"It's very frustrating not knowing," said Wareing.

Bill Oates, 76, who lives at Kin Court (3 Hyde Park Dr.) said his building, which has many seniors, was without power since Saturday.

"Someone should have checked on the seniors at least on Sunday," said Hyde, who said he was told by Hydro officials power wouldn't be restored until Christmas Day.



The icy scene left behind by the weekend storm might have been pretty if it wasn't so dangerous. Hydro crews have been working furiously to restore power throughout Halton Hills.
Photo by Jon Borgstrom

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