

# Town's goodwill, patience shines bright in blackout

By JASON MISNER  
The Champion

Goodwill, patience and consideration seemed instrumental in steering Miltonians through a power outage that first caused widespread blackouts late Thursday afternoon.

Different parts of town were re-connected with electricity throughout Friday, enabling businesses to re-open their doors to customers.

But one restaurant that didn't get power restored helped restore the faith in man with generosity that was appreciated by many.

The Fifth Wheel Truck Stop on Chisholm Drive had just finished setting up a buffet-style barbecue in the parking lot at around 4 p.m. Thursday when the lights suddenly turned off.

After learning a short time later through radio reports that millions of homes in Ontario and many parts of the eastern U.S. suffered blackouts, the restaurant felt the next step was a logical one — give the food away for free.

Fifth Wheel cook Cheri Perreault said at least two dozen trucks packed the parking lot once the power freeze started. They turned off their rigs' motors to chow down on thick, juicy barbecued sausage, pre-prepared cold pasta and colder

non-alcoholic drinks.

The blackout continued overnight and into Friday so the barbecuing festivities carried on. After all, the restaurant was shut down and there was tons of food to eat and no permanent refrigeration to keep it from spoiling.

(A refrigerated truck out back of the restaurant was used to store the food to keep it fresh).

"How much?," every person asked what Ms Perreault was charging as they sniffed their way to the lone barbecue that was working overtime.

"It's free," she responded, asking what they wanted.

"Everyone's been absolutely great," said Ms Perreault, turning over sausage after sausage amid the intoxicating aroma of cooked meat. "We're giving back to the community."

The restaurant expected power to resume by 4 p.m. Friday.

Alberta trucker Patti Bubrg, 62, was heading north on Regional Road 25 Thursday afternoon when suddenly traffic stopped. Street lights had gone out everywhere.

Slowly she made her way to the Fifth Wheel.

"These people here are awesome," she said, as Ms Perreault continually handed out sausages. "This isn't going to be cheap venture for them," noting the large

amount of free food they're giving away.

Around town, everyone had different things to do amid the power failure chaos but they all shared a common denominator — little to no electricity to help complete their tasks. The only way to bear through the turbulent times was to be patient, friendly and stay cool under pressure.

The Esso gas station at the corner of Market Drive and Martin Street had power restored early Friday. As a result, an endless stream of cars, SUVs, pick-up trucks and even boats lined up bumper-to-bumper to wait for their turn at the self-service pumps for much-needed gasoline.

It was hot Friday early afternoon — temperatures exceeded a sweaty 30 C — and the idling of engines surely didn't help. But what did were positive attitudes.

"There have been no problems, but it's busy," said cashier Raymon Womad, a slight smile on his face.

Said St. Thomas resident Serge Bavlovet: "Everybody is filling up and going, so no problems so far."

He eventually did the same and drove away.

At Subway on Market Drive, air-conditioned comfort and fresh sandwiches attracted many.

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