

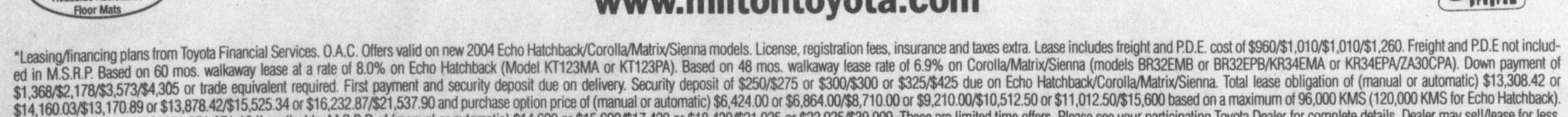
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Blackout cost Halton estimated

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

Last month's mammoth power blackout cost Halton Region as much as \$750,000, but officials are still firming everything up before they fire off the final bill to the provincial government for reimbursement.

The Eves government announced late last month a plan to compensate municipalities for costs incurred due to North America's worst-ever energy blackout.

And even though the Province is now in the throes of an election set for October 2, Halton officials are still holding the incumbent government to its word that it will provide some form of compensation.

"Now that things are in a different place because of the election, hopefully (provincial) staff will still be able to follow through with the information given," said Adelina Urbanksi, Halton's commissioner of social and community services. She was the acting CAO during the power crunch.

Part of the problem with the compensation announcement is that the government didn't specify details of how the claims system will work and how much will in fact be reimbursed, and the election may have muddied those compensation waters.

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh couldn't be reached by press time to help clarify the compensation process.

An eight-page, wide-ranging report was released publicly by the Region Thursday and concluded Halton forked out between \$500,000 and \$750,000 to deal with the unprecedented power shortage.

The financial impact pertained mostly to the initial hours spent dealing with the crisis after the August 14 blackout hit shortly after 4 p.m.

The report also highlighted how the Region's emergency response team sprang into action when the blackout hit, how officials communicated to residents during the blackout and suggestions the Region made to businesses on how to reduce power usage while the supply was unstable.

One of the main areas impacted regionally by the power shortage was policing, the report stated. The police service is a regional responsibility.

All police officers on duty were held over the afternoon of August 14. The night shift was called in early and police was able to double the number of staff working within two hours.

In addition, auxiliary officers were called in to help direct traffic gridlock due to malfunctioning lights, and plain clothes detectives were assigned to patrol darkened neighborhoods and business areas for security reasons.

Extra fuel was needed for police vehicles, which was a another cost.

"At no time was public safety compromised or police effectiveness marginalized," the report stated.

Other areas affected as noted in the report include:

• Ambulance services – also a regional responsibility - recalled management staff from vacation and held over administrative staff in order to meet demands for increased service. Off-duty paramedics were called in and on-duty paramedics were held over at shift changes in order to staff four additional ambulances.

• Extra fuel for generators was used to

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