

Power outages large concern for merchants

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"There was a lot of work to be done to bring the distribution system to Hydro One's standard," Mr. Manchee said.

The utility has installed fuse co-ordination to protect the station transformer and limit the number of customers affected by outages.

A number of underground switch gears were replaced and fault indicators were installed, making it easier to pinpoint problem areas.

The utility can supply the needs of the town for the foreseeable future, Shane Deugo, supervising distribution technician at Hydro One, told council.

The utility is encouraging homeowners to install Smart Meters, which schedule more electricity use for off-peak times, as well as other conservation initiatives.

To anticipate future demand, Hydro One installed a 44,000-volt line from Ballantrae to Bethesda Road and Hwy. 48, northwest of Stouffville.

Over the past two years, a number of alternate feeds were added to the power distribution system.

"This allows us to re-route electricity to and keep most customers' power on," said Mike Moran, customer operations manager for Hydro One.

A second high voltage line has been installed in Stouffville. By June, Stouffville will have two regulated feeds to improve the system's reliability. A third one is planned.

The hydro improvements are "encouraging", Councillor Rob Hargrave said.

"The older residents who have suffered through some of these blackouts can be reassured," he said.

During the town's ongoing interviews with local businesspeople for its business

retention and expansion program, the issue of power outages comes up frequently.

The town relayed the concerns to Hydro One, asking it to improve the situation and bring a report to council.

"The business community is being heard," town CAO Dave Cash said.

The power outages take their toll on residents and businesses.

During last July's 12-hour outage, Stouffville's Sobeys lost thousands of dollars worth of food. Prepared hot foods and foods from freezers and refrigerated cases had to be thrown out, because their safety couldn't be ensured.

Although hydro rates keep going up, when the power goes off, they do nothing to credit us.

About three months ago, there was a shorter power outage and only the prepared hot foods had to be discarded, Sobeys manager Colin MacIntosh said.

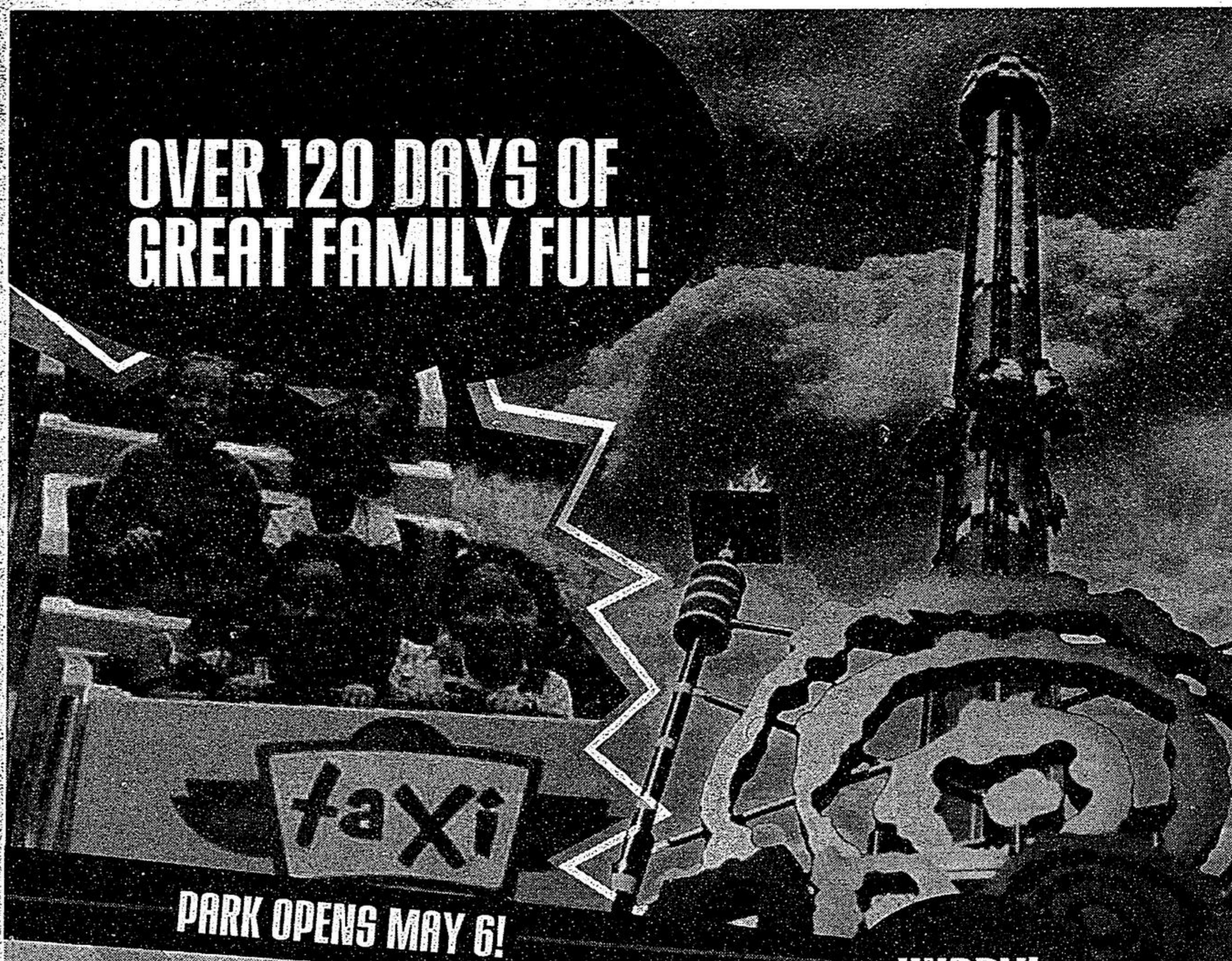
The number and extent of power outages here far exceeds what he has experienced in other communities, both large and small, he said.

Hair Break, a downtown hair and nail salon, has lost hundreds of dollars worth of business during outages, owner Tony Nardelli said.

"I have lost some days of business," he said.

Although hydro rates keep going up, when the power goes off, "they do nothing to credit us", Mr. Nardelli said.

When there is a problem, Hydro One is mandated by the Ontario Energy Board to be "on site" in urban locations in 60 minutes 90 per cent of the time, Mr. Moran said.



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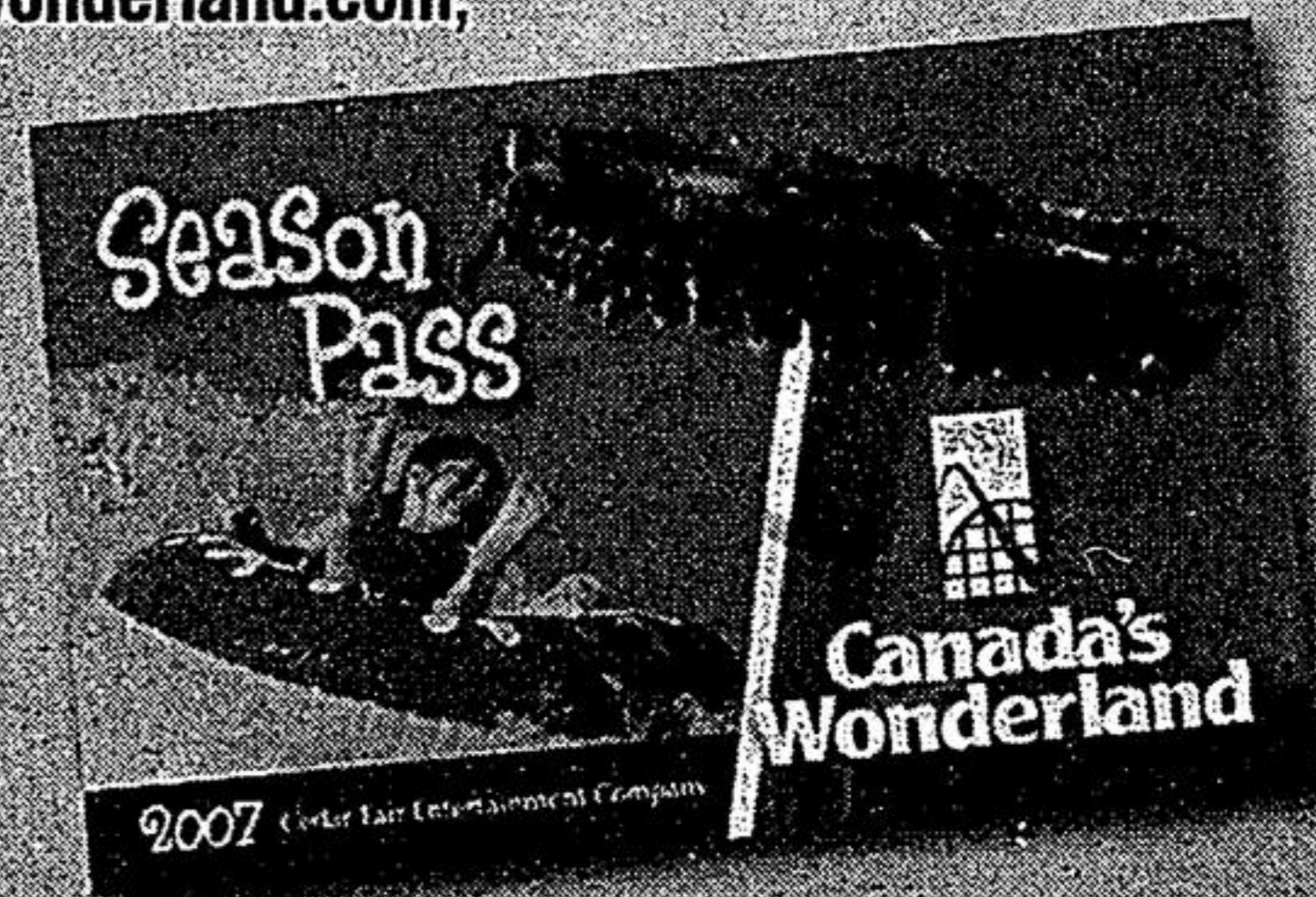
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