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Answers sought on west-end blackout

Hydro firms to address residents' concerns

Jan 20, 2009 04:30 AM

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DALE ANNE FREED
STAFF REPORTER

West-end activist Jutta Mason and her neighbours want fast answers on last week's blackout.

She emailed MPPs on the residents' behalf and they want to be briefed, she said.

Now Cheri DiNovo, MPP Parkdale-High Park, has called a community meeting for Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Parkdale Public Library, a week after the blackout, so residents can get answers from Toronto Hydro and Hydro One. Councillor Gord Perks for Parkdale-High Park will also attend.

"Why it happened and how they plan on preventing it" are the big questions said DiNovo. "That's what the community needs to hear."

"I thought this had been resolved back in 2003," DiNovo said, referring to the August blackout that blanketed Toronto.

"One of our big interests in this meeting is how to prepare in case such a thing could happen again," said Mason, the administrator for the Centre for Local Research into Public Space, which has added a page on its website devoted to power blackouts.

As well as hearing from the hydro companies, the meeting will include "a show-and-tell" about battery packs, wind-up radios, generators and solar panels as possible backup systems should another blackout happen.

"A Buddhist workshop in the neighbourhood managed to carry on because they had a generator," Mason said.

Last Thursday night, a black pall fell over the west end when a Dufferin St. transformer station flooded, triggered by a malfunctioning valve in the sprinkler system.

"We've got to look at all levels of maintenance history," said Laura Cooke, spokesperson for Hydro One.

"We are undertaking an investigation of the events that caused this valve to open."

The malfunctioning valve is located on the Hydro One side, where the power "is brought into the system as high voltage and then is distributed to Toronto Hydro customers through a low voltage system or distribution system," Cooke explained.

Power was restored Friday night, announced by Mayor David Miller at 9:40 p.m.

"We want answers," said DiNovo. "If this was a malfunction, simply as a matter of wear and tear, shouldn't all the sprinkler systems be checked to prevent this happening? And to those who really suffered because of costs (due to lost business) is there any recompense?"

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Don't be silly

Hydro is a monopoly, and it would cost money to inspect and repair their faulty sprinklers (money

which would cut into their profit margin, now that they're privatized ...). Besides - as long as the lights are on at their corporate head office ... do you really think they give a damn about ordinary citizens shivering in the dark? (i.e. they don't care unless their shareholders complain - unlike a Crown corporation such as the old Ontario Hydro, where every citizen was a "shareholder" ...)

Submitted by MacGregrrrr at 7:05 AM Tuesday, January 20 2009

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Malfunctioning sprinkler system

I contacted my City Councilor and they contacted Hydro One. Here is a sentence whet they sent me: "The Dufferin transformer station where your electricity comes from is jointly occupied by Hydro One and Toronto Hydro. The sprinkler system owned by Hydro One to protect equipment in the event of a fire or overheating of equipment malfunctioned and caused significant flooding to the building." The bottom line here is the Malfunctioning Sprinkler System, It is their fault, and caused hundreds of dollars of business loss, in my case \$ 35 taxi fees to get to & back a warm place. They should pay us back, never mind the human suffering and the possibility of death or conducting pneumonia. Only in Canada, eh?

Submitted by samm at 6:24 AM Tuesday, January 20 2009

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How Do Generators and Solar Panels Help People who Live in Apartments or Condos?

All of the advice for blackout preparedness seems to assume an individual or family living in a house. Certainly someone living in an apartment or a condo cannot use a generator or solar panels as an alternate energy source during a power blackout. What is the city willing to do to ensure that elevators and furnace systems in apartment buildings and condos have back-up power?

Submitted by KMorris at 6:16 AM Tuesday, January 20 2009

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Thank goodness SOMEONE is asking questions.

There was a brief comment in The Globe and Mail stating that a Hydro person (not willing to be named) said that in the future there will continue to be breakdowns of this kind at more frequent intervals. The big question is just how bad is the infrastructure and why hasn't anything been done to redesign it? Why haven't any of our news organizations asked questions or started an investigation? Why is the city government so irresponsible? We have had power "incidents" lately almost every week, with power going off anywhere from seconds to minutes. Something is very wrong.

Submitted by Rocketrosie at 5:37 AM Tuesday, January 20 2009

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