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Getting cold in here!

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Several years ago, a storm blanketed the region and much of the province with a coat of ice.

The lights went out as the weight of the ice brought down power lines and caused havoc just about everywhere.

I went out the following day to survey the damage. I was shocked to see how many trees had been damaged by the weight of the ice.

Some forested areas near where I lived were completely devastated, and it was strange to see areas with as many as half the trees reduced to shattered stumps after breaking at the trunk and dropping all their branches.

I was looking out the window of my home office during the night of the storm when I saw a neighbour's backyard tree collapse into the yard under the stress of the ice.

The whole situation made for a difficult few days following the storm.

People started complaining on social media about not having power and about the amount of ice still covering just about everything ? as if someone could force it to melt.

There were plenty of negative comments about Hydro's inability to restore power. There had been reports of people yelling abuse at workers.

During my travels, I went down a lonely concession to take photos of the damage. I had to navigate around a few trees that were scattered across the road.

It was a mess.

A large hydro truck had backed into a small cut-off and was starting to pull out as I approached.

I had to slow down again to go around another tree, and as I came up beside the truck, which was going the other way, I stopped and rolled down my window.

The guy behind the wheel of the hydro truck realized I had something to say, and he rolled down his window.

This guy had probably been up all night, working in freezing, dangerous conditions and moving from damaged line to damaged line to make repairs.

He looked weary, and from the look on his face, I think he was expecting me to yell out some comment complaining about the lack of power in my house.

?You must have done a lot of fixes over the night,? I said.

?Yeah,? he replied, ?And there's a lot more to do.?

?I know it's tough out there,? I said to this tired, hard-working man. ?You guys are doing a great job getting this all back together. I appreciated your efforts.?

He seemed a little surprised at hearing a compliment. But he smiled, gave me a wave, and said, ?Thanks, I appreciate that.?

He left to go to the next fallen line.

Often, we don't give enough credit to the first responders who attend emergencies and work long hours keeping our society safe.

Have you ever heard of someone calling the fire department and not showing up for the emergency?

Firefighters respond every time they are called. It doesn't matter the time of day or the weather conditions; when you call, you will hear the siren of a responding vehicle a few minutes later.

Several years ago, I witnessed and narrowly missed being involved in a serious auto accident.

A few other people and I went to assist the injured parties.

Paramedics arrived a few minutes later, and we cleared out to let them do their job.

They are trained to help and know what to do when someone is injured or experiencing a medical emergency.

If you have ever received a speeding ticket, you understand what it's like to suddenly realize those flashing lights in the rearview mirror are meant for you.

Yeah, it's disappointing, and it's most likely going to cost you a few dollars.

For some reason, a lot of people blame the cop for pulling them over. However, if they were speeding, they brought this on themselves.

You can almost bet the next time you are travelling down that road, you are keeping an eye on the speedometer ? traffic enforcement works.

When I think of these types of jobs, I always remember my Grade 7 homeroom teacher.

She hated kids. She screamed at us all the time.

She screamed that if we didn't go to university and get a degree, like her, we were all failures in life.

Yes, she actually said that to her Grade 7 students.

And yet, that degree in English literature doesn't mean all that much when the power is out, and you're in danger of freezing to death.

I wonder what Mrs. Hay would have said when the power was out, and her house was getting cold, and she called the power company, only to hear, ?Sorry, Mrs. Hay, no one here has a degree in English literature, so we can't restore your power.?