

Non-stop winter weather continues

By Michelle Heshka

Quinte residents are calling this weekend's freezing temperatures and blowing snow the biggest "white out" of 2014.

Environment Canada is calling it a snow squall.

With the weekend's temperatures ranging between -4 C and -20 C before the wind chill, the streets of Belleville were covered in ice. On top of the ice were several centimetres of fresh snow, which continued to fall.

The CFB Trenton weather office said more than six centimetres of snow fell on the Quinte area on Saturday. Since then, the Quinte area has received an additional nine centimetres of snow.

The wind is what really increased the severity of the weather throughout the weekend, according to the weather office.

"Strong winds up to 60 kilometres an hour caused huge snow drifts causing poor visibility on roads and highways."

The freezing, windy snowfall left the Quinte area in a dangerous state. The continuous snowfall and high winds caused the "white out," which severely decreased visibility on the roads and intensified the dangers that come with winter driving.

The intensity of the snow squall prompted the police in Belleville, Prince Edward County, Napanee, Quinte West and Northumberland to call for the public to avoid driving unless absolutely essential until the road conditions improved.

The terrible weather continued through the weekend and into the beginning of the week. Weather conditions remained bad enough Monday to cancel classes and exams for local schools. Many high schools have pushed back their exam schedules one day due to the bad weather conditions. Even classes at Loyalist College were cancelled Monday.

According to Loyalist's Dianne Spencer, executive director of college advancement and external relations, the decision to cancel classes was made for safety reasons.

Even though classes were cancelled, the school remained open.

"This decision is guided by the college policy which states that in the event of adverse weather conditions or emergency situations, every reasonable effort will be made to keep the college open," said Spencer.

Snow squall watches and warnings remained in effect for Monday.

Geoff Coulson, a meteorologist with Environment Canada, said the reason behind the snow squalls is a change of direction in the wind.



Photo by Dillan Cools

Noah Streek bails after hitting a jump on the North Street Park hill on his snow day. Although the weather over the last few days has left drivers shaking their heads, kids were thrilled to head out on the slopes when school was cancelled Monday. For more on the weather, see page four.

"This winter has been a harsher winter than what we've seen in the last few years.

The winds have been coming in southwest instead of northwest, which brought the intensity of the snow squalls. The Quinte area had 15 centimetres of snowfall over the weekend with up to 60 kilometres per hour winds."

"Chances are the winds will come in southwest again Tuesday afternoon,"

Coulson added.

On Saturday and Sunday, sections of Highway 401 were closed for hours at a time with OPP responding to several multi-car pileups and accidents. The severity of the snow squall was so intense that snowplows were taken off the road in Northumberland County.

Ontario Provincial Police said that since Friday evening, they responded to

more than 1,600 crashes. The OPP ordered more than 60 road and highway closures across the province.

Aside from terrible driving conditions, this weekend's precipitation caused many cancellations of community events.

Local happenings such as church events, libraries, community classes and bingo halls were closed.

Environment Canada advised motor-

ists to exercise caution while driving, as snow squalls reduce visibility severely. The weather will continue to cause hazardous winter driving conditions.

The CFB Trenton weather office predicts that snow squalls will continue into Wednesday afternoon with temperatures going down to -17 C. They expect an additional 12-14 centimetres of snow before Thursday morning.

Provincial minister on hand to discuss student debt

By Mandy Larade

Although it is a new year, old problems remain. One of those problems is something very well known and discussed: student debt.

Ontario's minister of training, colleges, and universities, Brad Duguid, was in downtown Belleville at Loyalist College's Community Employment Services last Friday to speak about the success of the Youth Employment Fund.

The province of Ontario has recently added a benefit for post-secondary students. Students who are eligible for the Ontario Student Assistance Program, or OSAP, are also eligible to get up to 30 per cent off of their tuition. This rebate means that students pursuing a college or university degree can get up to \$1,730 back and students pursuing a college diploma or certificate can get up to \$790 back.

While this is beneficial to students across the province, controversy has arisen due to the rebate's availability to stu-

dents in privately-owned career colleges.

Tuition at these private colleges is often triple that of public programs.

Duguid said that the investment in students at these private institutions is fair, despite public opposition.

"Our priority should be, as a government, not to tell students what their choices should be but to support them in any way we can and to do it in a way that's fair. That's why we've extended to those small schools in a very modest way," said Duguid.

In comparison to the 230,000 students who qualify for the rebate in public programs, the amount of students attending private colleges is quite less.

"Compared to 230,000 students, we're talking about 4,000 students who would qualify for that. They're low-income students who need a little bit of help," said Duguid.

"These students are already eligible for OSAP, so it doesn't make sense for them to be eligible for OSAP but not for the 30 per cent."

President and CEO of Colleges Ontario, Linda Franklin, said that the priority should be on students who don't meet the qualifications for OSAP. This includes students who aren't residents of Ontario or who have been out of high school for more than four years.

"The government's first priority should be to give back the money to college students who had it first taken away," said Franklin.

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Photo by Lacy Gillott

Many of Brighton's Winterfest events were cancelled because of harsh weather conditions this Saturday. However, despite there not being many people to take the horse-drawn wagon ride, Eric Linton and his horses kept on trucking through the heavy snowfall.

Weather wipes out Winterfest

By Lacy Gillott

High wind speeds and a lot of snowfall caused many of Brighton's 20th annual Winterfest events to be cancelled Saturday.

Winterfest Co-chair Derek Madder, who has been a part of the Winterfest committee for 14 years, said this is the first year they have had to cancel events.

"I mean it's disappointing, when you put all this work into doing these things. But, it's winter and you can't count on the weather," said Doug Platt, a 10-year member of the committee.

"It's not so bad, snowing, it's Winterfest right. But, it's the people trying to get here. The highway 401 is closed and the plows are not on the roads, so it's really tough."

Despite the frigid temperatures and the harsh blowing snow, the horsedrawn wagon ride was still taking place outside the Brighton Community Centre. Although not many people were riding, Eric Linton and his horses kept going strong for as long as they could.

The mayor's breakfast that took place Saturday morning was a huge success, and over 100 people came to the feast.

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