

WEATHER: HEAT WAVE

Ontario keeps power demand in check

Businesses scaled back electricity usage in response to requests for conservation, energy operator says

UNNATI GANDHI
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Despite temperatures soaring to the highest of the year yesterday, Ontario managed to avoid breaking any records for power demand.

The agency that monitors the province's power system attributed much of the reprieve to big businesses scaling back on electricity usage in response to a precautionary request for conservation, as much of Ontario entered the third day of a heat wave.

At its peak, the province used 25,584 megawatts of power an hour yesterday, short of the projected peak of 26,302 megawatts, according to the Independent Electricity System Operator.

The record was set last year on Aug. 1, when demand reached 27,005 MW.

Print Edition - Section Front



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"We had the appeal out, so we know that customers were cutting back," IESO spokesman Terry Young said.

"We also got a bit of a break from the weather and we had some cloud cover come in midafternoon in parts of the province."

PowerStream Inc., one of the largest local electricity distribution companies in the province, said in a release that several local businesses in York Region cut back in response to the power advisory, including Magna International Inc. and Canada's Wonderland.

But the energy operator still had to import nearly 1,200 MW of power an hour, despite a Pickering nuclear reactor coming back online Wednesday night after two weeks. Two other Pickering reactors will remain offline until the end of August.

With air conditioners humming on low and blinds pulled shut to keep the sun out, Torontonians survived the hottest day of the year yesterday.

It was the third day of temperatures above 32, officially putting the Greater Toronto Area under a heat wave.

The thermometer rose to 35 at Pearson airport yesterday afternoon (even though it felt more like the low 40s with the humidity), beating the previous record for Aug. 2 (34.3) set last year.

Environment Canada senior climatologist Dave Phillips said the long weekend is also shaping up to be "comfortably beautiful."

With a cold front moving in over the next few days, humidity levels will drop significantly without affecting the temperature much, he said.

"It'll be some nice Canadian air that will have a warmness to it," he said.

"So it's going to feel a lot better. It will get rid of the smog advisory. But it's perfect for beaching and swimming without the health risks."

Today's high is expected to reach 33, while the forecast calls for 31 tomorrow and 29 on Sunday.

There's a 70-per-cent chance of thundershowers on Monday.

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