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Halton crime rate at record low in 2013

By **DAVID LEA**
Metroland West Media Group

Halton police say 2013 set a record for having the lowest crime rate since Halton became a region in 1974.

In a report to the Halton Regional Police Service Board last week, Chief Stephen Tanner noted Halton saw 10,804 criminal offences in 2013 — compared to 12,076 the previous year.

That's a 10.5 per cent drop in numbers, but translates to a 12.7 per cent drop in the crime rate, when the region's growing population is factored in, said Tanner.

And that crime rate is the lowest seen since Halton became a region in 1974, said the chief.

"Let me congratulate the entire service for continuing to have a very positive impact on reducing crime throughout the Region," said Tanner.

"Our clearance rates significantly increased in 2013... What we have right now (crime rates) are fantastic. I'm extremely proud of the uniform, frontline and investigative people that are bringing those to us."

Some of the report highlights included news that violent crime, such as assault, robbery and murder, dropped 5.6 per cent — 2,095 incidents in 2012 to 1,977 in 2013.

Property crime, such as break-ins, thefts and mischief, fell by 13.3 per cent — from 8,969 occurrences in 2012 to 7,772 last year.

In addition to fewer crimes being reported, more arrests were made for crimes committed last year.

That's reflected, said Tanner, in a significant boost in the clearance rate, which was at 44 per cent in 2013, up from 37.8 per cent in 2012.

This trend is continuing this year. "Carrying into 2014, the overall clearance rate for January was 55.6 per cent, up from 48.5 per cent in January 2013," said Tanner.

"We are looking at where our clearance rates tend to come from... Hypothetically, if we found that 60-70 per cent of our clearances were coming from investigative units, criminal investigative bureaus in the different districts, the major crime units and not from uniformed patrol, that may indicate we might want to put additional resources into those units if we want to have a further impact."

Not all the news was good however. Crimes such as bail violations, counterfeit currency and disturbing the peace rose by 4.2 per cent — up to 1,055 from 1,012 in 2013 and 2012, respectively. Motor vehicle collisions were also up 7.3 per cent (from 8,000 in 2012 to 8,587 in 2013).

Impaired driving was also slightly on the rise — up by 1.2 per cent from 345 incidents in 2012 to 349 last year.

Board member Andrew Tyrrell asked that with distracted driving a growing problem, statistics on it be included as a separate category in the future.

"It really is an epidemic," agreed Tanner. "I was on Lakeshore Road at Bronte the other night and of the 10 vehicles that passed me five (drivers) were on cell-phones. It is one of the leading causes of accidents."



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A thoughtful gesture

Halton Food for Thought recently held a Twitter challenge looking for the high school whose students could re-tweet the most nutrition messages. Georgetown District High School was the winner with more than 450 re-tweets and for their efforts the entire student body was rewarded with breakfast one morning earlier this month. Pictured in the forefront distributing food items is Kelly Stronach, program development manager for HFFT. *Photo by Eamonn Maher*