

Hate crime in Halton on a downward trend: police

Police statistics reveal hate occurrences at 10-year low

By Nathan Howes

METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

Hate crime in Halton continues to decline, and in 2016, was at its lowest in the past decade. According to a report presented at the Halton Regional Police Services Board meeting Feb. 23, there were 25 hate-related occurrences, including two hate crimes and nine suspected hate crimes, in Halton last year — the lowest tally in the last 10 years. There were 33 hate-related occurrences in 2015 while activity peaked in 2011, with 52 incidents, representing a consistent decline in the number of the types of occurrences since then. There were eight fewer occurrences last year than in 2015. That represents a 24 per cent decrease and a 52 per cent decrease from the peak year of 2011. Oakville had the highest number of occurrences in 2016 — 10 — while Halton Hills had the lowest at one. Burlington and Milton had eight and six incidents, respectively. Police say most of the reported incidents

appear to be random in nature, and to date, there has been no organized hate-based crime identified or active hate groups operating in the region.

Two occurrences in 2016 were defined as a hate crime and nine others were categorized as suspected hate crimes.

This signifies a drop in hate crimes of six occurrences (there were eight in 2015) and a decrease of two suspected hate crimes from 11 in 2015 to nine in 2016.

One of the hate crimes involved violence and resulted in a suspect being arrested at the scene of an assault and the other was not overtly violent and involved the brief targeting of a person on social media.

"Ongoing monitoring of these types of incidents is critical," stated the report, noting potential influencing global factors such as terrorism, refugee crises and extremism.

In 2014, the Ontario Police College and the Hate Crime Extremism Investigative Team, in collaboration with Statistics Canada, developed guidelines for reporting hate crimes, as well as a framework for a consistent definition of a hate crime.

The guidelines define hate crime as a criminal violation motivated by hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, skin colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical dis-

ability, sexual orientation or any other similar factor.

A suspected hate crime is a criminal offence against a person or property with reasonable suspicion that is motivated by hate/bias/or prejudice, and cannot be proven to be solely motivated by hate.

A hate/bias incident involves behaviour that, though motivated by bias against a victim's race, religion, ethnic/national origin, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation, is not a

criminal act.

Hostile speech or other disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour may be motivated by bias, but is not necessarily criminal in nature. They become crimes only when they directly incite others to commit violence against identifiable groups or if they place a potential victim or group in fear of their safety. The three types of acts comprise the hate-related occurrences statistics, as reported by police.

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