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Anti-pesticide faction fails to sway council

By Angela Blackburn
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Love 'em or hate 'em, Oakvillians are passionate about pesticides.

On Monday night, they brought their arguments to town hall as councillors determined what to do about weeds in Oakville this summer.

In a 9-2 recorded vote the Town gave a thumbs up to an Integrated Pest Management Program for 2001 — a \$30,800 plan that mixes pesticides and non-chemical weed treatments.

Councillors noted only 2.8% (30.9 hectares) of Oakville's 1,086 hectares of park land is lined-up for pesticide spraying.

Ward 1 Councillor Kevin Flynn successfully proposed further advances in Town efforts to reduce pesticide use on public land.

That includes finding easier maintenance alternatives to turf for areas like boulevards; reviewing topsoil standards for developers; and, 2002 budget options for pesticide alternatives.

The Town will also poll community opinion by this summer, said Mayor Ann Mulvale.

Council avoided wading into the issue of banning pesticide use on private property.

The Town doesn't have the legal clout to do it, but will watch as a similar decision is challenged in court in Hudson, Québec.

"If I were a betting man, I'd wager that municipalities would not be granted the right of banning pesticides on private property," said Flynn.

Mulvale said that the Town's reduction efforts would likely put it into a similar position as municipalities like Waterloo or Burlington, which either don't use pesticides or use them only in emergencies.

"It's a good compromise," said Mulvale who called for a need for balance. She called Town's decision is "defendable and moving to sustainable."

(See 'Pesticide' page A5)

Women police officers honoured by their peers

A pair of Halton Regional Police officers has been honoured with major awards by Ontario Women in Law Enforcement (OWLE).

Det. Insp. Signy Pittman was recognized with the Mentoring Award while Constable Diane Hendry won the Community Service Award.

The lone OWLE 25-year Service Award winner from Halton Regional Police was records supervisor Denise Holland, a civilian employee.

The awards were handed out Friday night at OWLE's Third Annual Awards Banquet held in Mississauga for nominees and honourees from a score of police agencies.

The Mentoring Award is given to an individual who assists officers in law enforcement, develops programs and policies and assists with committees that review policing issues.

Pittman, the officer in charge of the service's Regional Criminal Investigation Bureau, was recognized as an inspirational role model, who provides opportunities for others and makes herself personally available for advice and consultations. Pittman also encourages networking and serves on committees for the advancement of the law enforcement profession.



Det. Insp.
Signy Pittman



Constable
Diane Hendry

(See 'Diversity' page A2)



Photo by Barrie Erskine

Halton Regional Police Explosives Disposal Unit member Sgt. Chris Perkins in his bomb suit.

Hi-tech bomb experts rely on quick wits and improvisation

By Howard Mozel
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

For a country experiencing minimal terrorism, Canada remains a recognized world leader in bomb disposal technology and expertise. The Explosives Disposal Unit of Halton Regional Police is no exception.

As a part-time unit, the squad includes four highly trained officers who carry out their routine police duties, but are called upon to deal with explosives and "improvised explosive devices" on an as-needed basis.

They include Staff Sgt. Tom Chapman, Sgt. Chris Perkins, Const. Tom Moore and Const. Thom Doherty, who employ everything from robotic weapon delivery systems and x-ray machines to a battery of other tools of the trade. Sophisticated as all this

equipment is, few pieces of gear are as irreplaceable as the human mind's ability to adapt and its capacity to deal with the rigors and stresses of life in the squad.

"By and large, bomb techs are a little on the edge," said Perkins.

Contrary to popular stereotype, squad members are far from crazy, Perkins continues, but are "imaginative" individuals who can cogitate outside conventional thinking. They are adept at deliberating problems then using, and often modifying, equipment on the fly to find solutions.

Perkins said unit members must also think quickly under pressure and because explosive disposal is not an exact science, flexibility in ever-changing situations is a must. That's why duct tape, cardboard and Styrofoam are among an officer's best friends despite all the training on much more advanced equipment.

"Duct tape is a bomb tech's dream," Perkins laughs.

Despite the dangers associated with his job, Perkins says he has the utmost respect for other officers on the force - such as the Tactical and Rescue Unit, whose members have the courage and skill to enter a building after a barricaded gunman.

Halton's Explosives Disposal Unit responds on average to 35 to 40 calls for service per year, which range anywhere from the safe removal of old military ordnance in someone's attic to a mentally ill person armed with a grenade. The unit is summoned to four to six calls a year involving actual improvised explosive devices or hoaxes.

"As far as we're concerned, everything is considered live," said Perkins, who has dealt with six "real McCoys" since 1992.

Some of the stranger calls include the two

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