

\$1 million communication centre has police signals flying

It is only a matter of seconds now, between the time police receive a call for help, and officers are on their way to the scene of an accident or crime.

It used to be a matter of several minutes.

The improvement in police efficiency is largely due to a brand new \$1 million communications system.

The first of its kind in any Ontario regional police force, the system can be found at Halton Regional Police headquarters in Oakville.

The increase in both crime calls and accidents prompted Halton region to go ahead with the project, which is now being used as a model for development for a similar system in Peel Region and other areas of Ontario.

The communications system serves police in Oakville, Burlington, Georgetown, Milton and Acton and all rural areas surrounding those towns.

The region is further divided into three districts of Milton, Georgetown and Acton as District One, Oakville is District Two and Burlington is District Three.

Each district is then assigned a radio channel, providing radio contact between nearly 80 patrol units and headquarters.

It is headquarters that

receives all inquiries, complaints and crime reports, and it is from there that all orders come from, explained Sergeant Gerry Penman, supervisor of the system in Oakville.

Two dispatch officers and their supervisor monitor the police units throughout the region and assign police officers to calls directly or through the precinct offices.

In addition to the radio channels provided for Halton Regional Police communication, the new radio system also, includes a fourth channel for communication with other police forces, and a fifth channel for marine officers in Lake Ontario.

Should an officer need to get in touch with another regional police unit or with the OPP, he would use the "provincial" channel.

Using the co-operative efforts of a Lake Ontario police rescue force, a citizen band channel and a CB base station on Navy St. at the Oakville harbor, police also have a "marine" channel hook-up.

Linking the lines of communication between various forces and the marine police force undoubtedly provides faster and more efficient police service, assured Mr. Penman.

The hook-up of police services through a central

communication station has been long due, he said, and the Oakville office is now setting an example for other area regional forces.

Although North Halton is yet to have a major bank hold-up or hostage taking incident, provision has been made for it.

A sixth radio station, named the "tactical" channel allows any police unit in Halton region to immediately signal for assistance.

Similar to a walkie-talkie, the channel permits officers to speak directly to one another, without travelling through the Oakville central station.

Handling all the lines of communications is not a simple job and requires skill as well as knowledge of the system and the physical layout of the region.

Two dispatch constables, occasionally backed by a third constable, control 76 units of uniformed cars and foot patrol officers.

Dispatch officers must know at a second's glance at a unit map on the wall, how many officers are available in the area of trouble and what officers can be pulled from another area to assist if necessary.

Dispatch officers must keep a constant status of where the officers are and what they are doing, explained Sergeant Penman.

It takes approximately six months for a dispatch trainee to learn the lines, as it is, and trainees work alongside seasoned dispatch officers for the first while.

Learning the trade is practically 99 per cent on the job training, he stated, and officers start with handling calls on the C.P.I.C. station.

C.P.I.C. is the Canadian Police Information Centre, which has computer centres in Toronto and Ottawa.

Police checking for stolen cars or any stolen property will place a request with central communication in Oakville to telephone the Toronto or Ottawa computer centre for a check.

Although crime has no particular schedule, there are busy times and "slow days", according to police.

Sergeant Penman estimates crime calls and accident calls pick up after Wednesday afternoon, peaking during the weekend. Festivities, and holidays are also guaranteed that both police dispatchers and officers will have a hectic schedule.

Alongside the dispatch officers are seated the complaint officers who record all complaints coming through to police.

Crime calls are definitely on the increase, according to officials, particularly those of "high priority".

Break and enter and robberies are growing, said police, but probably the most dangerous crime increase is that of husband and wife battles.

Family arguments are the most dangerous for police officers to walk into, said Sergeant Penman.

"More officers are hurt walking into domestic problems than with any other incidents of crime," he said.

The safety factor is therefore dependent upon the efficiency of the communications system and the skill with which it is handled.

The new system is appreciated by all who use it and those being served by it, according to officials.

Previous to its installation, Halton Regional Police had "bits and pieces of equipment" relics donated by the Burlington and Oakville police departments, after regionalism came into effect.

Under the old system, calls received at the central stations were written down on complaint cards and handed to dispatch officers.

The lack of previous modern facilities resulted in it being hectic all the time, according to Sergeant Penman.

Although progress has not reduced the number of calls, the new system is credited with making the job of handling calls that much easier.

The new \$1 million system has not been without its problems though.

The whole project started in 1967, after a communications expert was hired to study the needs of the region

in terms of a good police communications system.

General Electric and Bell Canada have both designed and pioneered the system to meet the needs of the police force, and have consequently experienced the growing pains of an advanced radio and communications network.

All circuits are installed underground, and there have still been some problems with the cables.

"The main problem is to get them completely fool-proof," said Sergeant Penman.

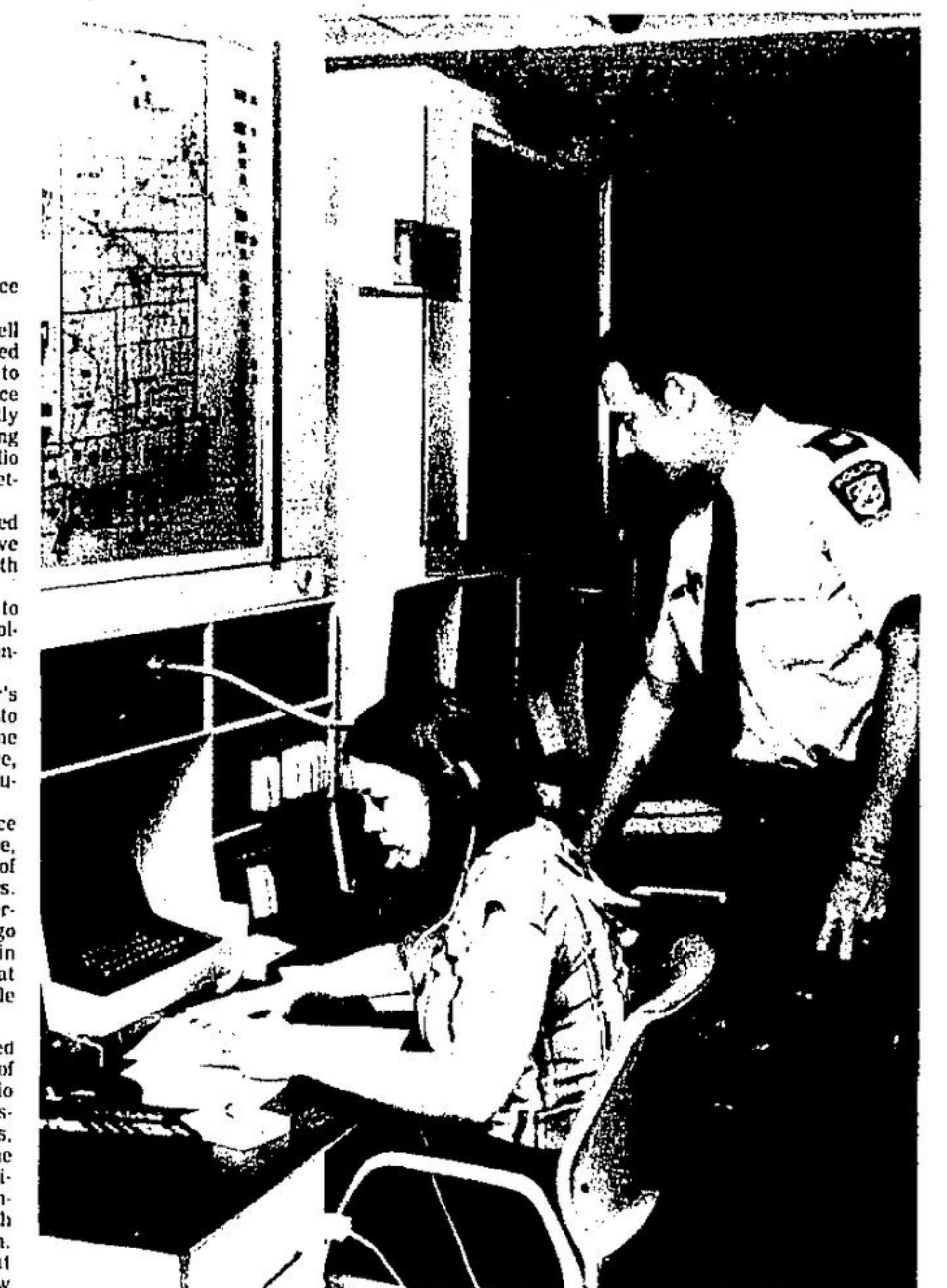
Once a householder's private line got switched onto the radio cable, causing some embarrassment for police, Bell Canada and the particular resident.

A construction crew once cut an underground cable, causing a mild attack of chaos at police headquarters. There are still stand-by alternatives should something go wrong, and it is usually within a few minutes of trouble that the problem is solved while repairs are made.

The project has entailed more than the installation of brilliant technological radio systems. Towers were necessary to receive all the signals, and for Acton and Milton, the towers have meant significant progress in terms of contact between police in both areas and the central station.

"Because of the fact that Acton, for example was low lying, it was impossible for radio signals to get through," explained Sergeant Penman.

Now, there is no more of that problem with the facility of 230-foot tower in Speyside, north of Milton.



CHECKING police dispatch operations at Halton Regional Police headquarters in Oakville is Sergeant Gerry Penman. The new \$1 million communications complex enables police to be on the road to a call 30 seconds after the police switchboard has received the call for help. Handling dispatch calls is Linda Lindsay of Oakville.



A CAT ON A SHEEP! Is there a better way of spending a lazy afternoon in the sun? Wee kitten Mark has found a comfy place to sleep on friend Lucy. He curled up with Lucy when she was lying down for a nap and decided to stay put when the sheep rose for a snack. Both animals are Acton residents.

Museum artifacts at CNE

Halton Region Museum artifacts will be on display at this year's CNE as the Ex marks its 100th year.

The artifacts will be part of the display in the Better Living Building. Household items, kitchen and medicinal pieces will be included in the "truck load" of artifacts that will be depicting the changing times over the life of the Ex.

Curator Erla Brittain says representatives of the CNE toured the Halton Region Museum at Kelso in May to select the items which were required.

Church Services

CHURCHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH
Churchill Rd. N.
Minister
The Rev. J. L. McFadden
B.A., B.D.
and Mrs. Eleanor McFadden,
B.A.
Box 731, Guelph,
Phone 821-3215
Sunday, August 13, 1978
For the month of August Combined Worship Service at Churchill Community Church at 10:30 a.m.
The church on the hill is an interdenominational congregation ministering to the needs of the community.
Everyone Welcome

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA KNOX CHURCH ACTON
Rev. Andrew H. McKenzie
B.A., B.D. - Minister
Mr. E. A. Hansen, B.A.
Organist and Choir Master
COMBINED WORSHIP SERVICE
July Worship: 10:00 a.m. Trinity United Church, Rev. Chas. Beaton Preaching 853-2090 or 853-1444.
August Worship: 10:00 a.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, Rev. A. H. McKenzie Preaching 853-2360 or 853-0974.
Everyone Welcome

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA TRINITY CHURCH ACTON
Rev. Chas. Beaton B.A., B.D.
Dr. George Elliott
M.A., Ph.D.
Director of Music
ACTON BAPTIST CHURCH
80 Mill Street East,
Founded 1842
Pastor: Rev. Don Sydney
B.Sc., M. Div.
Pastor's Phone - 853-1835
Church Phone 853-0690
Sunday, August 13, 1978
For the month of August and September 3rd, morning worship at Churchill Community Church at 10:30 a.m.
Please note change of time:
August 14
8:30 p.m. - Mission Circle Picnic at the home of Mrs. Marjorie Landsborough, 97 Lake Ave.

BETH-EL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
Sunday, August 13, 1978
Sunday Worship Services at 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Preschool Sunday School during the morning service. Sunday School during the morning service.
You are welcome
Church of the "Back to God Hour" heard over these stations: Hamilton C.K.O.C. 7:00 a.m. dial 1150, St. Catharines, C.H.S.C. 8:30 a.m., dial 1226, Toronto, C.H.I.N.F.M. 8:00 a.m. dial 101 M.H.Z., Toronto C.K.F.H. 11:30 a.m. dial 1430.

THE CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR
1872 - Anglican - 1978
Corner
Willow St. and St. Alban's Dr.
Rev. Leonard Ewing
Rector
Director of Music
Mrs. Frank Oakes
Sunday, August 13, 1978
TRINITY XII
10:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist

MAPLE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH
177 Maple Ave.,
Georgetown
Sunday August 13, 1978
9:45 a.m. - Sunday School
11:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Hear Dr. E.S. Kerr
Interim Pastor
THURSDAY 7:30 P.M.
Dr. Kerr Speaks
"The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada"

EVANGEL PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE
33 Churchill Rd. N.
At Evangel Summer Spells
Sunday School Weekly
at 9:45 a.m.
Phone 853-0481 for transportation
Sunday, August 13, 1978
9:45 a.m. - Sunday School
11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship
7:00 p.m. - Evening Service
TUESDAY
8:00 p.m. - Bible Study

SALVATION ARMY
Gospel Service at the Acton Baptist Church every Sunday evening at 7:00 p.m. throughout the summer. Everyone welcome.

No Tale today
Because of the holiday weekend Town Hall Tales will not appear today. The series will resume next week.

Peach crop

The peach harvest is under way and, despite dry conditions the crop is expected to equal last year's production.

More than 100 million pounds of peaches, valued at \$15 million, will be picked by mid-September, says Bob Wilcox, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food tree fruit specialist.

"The dry weather has slightly reduced fruit size, but the quality of this year's peaches is excellent," he says.

The Niagara peninsula, where 80 percent of Ontario's peaches are grown, has been without rain for more than six weeks. The southwestern Ontario crop faces similar conditions.

Mr. Wilcox says the peach crop hasn't suffered as much as other crops, because fruit trees have deep roots. This allows them to draw water from deep in the soil.

Although the lack of rain won't have serious effects unless it reaches the 10-week mark, Mr. Wilcox says growers are anxious for rain to improve fruit size.

Rams vs Erindale

Acton Ram Oldtimers will put their modest two game unbeaten string on the line Thursday night at the Community Centre when they play host to Erindale.
Game time is 8:30 p.m. and admission is free.
At 7:30 on the same evening the Acton Rambler pee-wee team will host Kitchener.

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