



# Season's Greetings

'Tis the season to celebrate and share glad tidings of joy. May this wonderful holiday season bring you the best of everything.



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### Police plan open house same 12 officers here

The group of Halton Regional Police officers assigned to Acton will be stabilized in the new year and the force will be holding an open house sometime next month.

Thursday Chief James Harding and a half dozen of his senior officers spent over two hours explaining the operations of the regional police force and answering questions from a delegation of six Actonians.

In addition the chief decided to allow Lorne Doberthien to be unofficial liaison between the police and Acton residents. Doberthien will carry residents' complaints and concerns to the force, but the police will reply to residents directly.

The meeting was set up in response to numerous complaints about policing here from citizens. Acton's three councillors, Dave Whiting, Terry Grubbe and Ross Knechtel were joined by residents Doberthien, Cory VanMerkesteyn and Bruce Shoemaker.

Everyone expressed regret that more citizens who had indicated they would be attending didn't show up for the meeting.

Towards the end of his presentation Harding made two important announcements, moves aimed at satisfying the community and promoting more co-operation between police and citizens.

He explained Acton is never left uncovered by police so the people here must see the officers.

However, Harding noted, the problem is Acton doesn't know the officers and the people want to know the officers.

The force has been rotating officers through the five Halton Hills patrol zones the past couple of years, but Thursday Harding made a commitment that as of January 1 the same 12 officers will be assigned to cover 10 and 11 zones (Acton and area) and not be changed.

The chief noted because of days off, sick leave, training sessions etc, occasionally officers not in the Acton group of 12 may have to work in zones 10 and 11, "but basically it will be the same 12 people all year."

The force has always tried to leave a core of six officers who are familiar with the town patrolling Acton and rotate in six others so people here should know six policemen now, Harding said.

With 12 officers assigned to Acton Harding said he hopes the officers and public will mix and get to know each other.

In addition the force will hold an open house in Acton next month, the date and place still to be determined. He has set 10 a.m. to noon and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. as the times for the open house and the Acton Business Improvement Area has volunteered to supply coffee and donuts for the drop-in.

On hand for the open house will be the chief, deputy chief Bob Middaugh, district commander Matt McPherson, crime prevention officers and other brass as well as the 12 officers assigned next year to Acton. Harding said the force hopes residents will come in and talk to them about their policing concerns.

Knechtel describes the open house as a "delightful idea."

Doberthien, whose letter to this newspaper rapping the police sparked the controversy resulting in Thursday's meeting, warned the force might have to send officers out on the street to grab residents and drag them to the open house.

Harding said the force "will bust our guts to deliver the service people want." He urged Lorne and the others in attendance help the force by grabbing people and dragging them to the meeting.

Harding said the force needs "to be told" what Acton wants from its police. "We need communication to identify the problems."

Early next month Middaugh will be in town to hear the concerns of BIA members and said the force will bring films and speak to any service club that invites them.

Public relations officer Norm Ryall said the force has had only two requests for speaking engagements from Acton, both times the Optimists, and they have been invited into the schools five times.

"We will go anywhere, anytime, to talk to anyone," Harding declared.

He pointed to a survey on Fridays in Acton in November which showed sometimes the police were as long as 30 minutes or more responding to calls but on the average responded to calls in 4.9 minutes.

When citizens feel the police have been slow he urged they contact the brass promptly and give the force the time, date and place of the slow response so it can be investigated. The police will then get back and explain why they were slow and also be able to discover ways of speeding up service and zero in on dispatch problems. "It is vital for us to know."

Harding said the future emphasis of the force will

be on crime prevention rather than just reaction. But, crime prevention will never work without public participation and co-operation.

Doberthien said people are reluctant to contact police directly about concerns and complaints.

The police department is an alien world to most people and while they are willing to air all sorts of complaints to him they just won't go to the police.

He said somehow the force has to get through to people the need to contact Harding and others. Police need to raise their profile in the community

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### Probation for technical theft

Wellington County Court Judge J.D. Sutherland never saw anything like the community support which Keith Black received in court Monday.

The court gave Black a three-year probation term plus a suspended sentence for his part in what the judge described as the "technical theft" of more than 300 cattle.

"I've never seen a court room full of people who've shown up for what I believe is support for the accused," said the judge.

Twelve Acton High School teachers, Black's co-workers, two church ministers plus 15 or so friends and relatives filled most of the court's seats.

Some of those people in court wrote letters of character reference for Black. Defence lawyer David Smith told the court he has received more than 70 such letters. The particular trait which surfaces in many letters is Black's naivete. "I think that explains why he finds himself here today," said Smith.

Crown Attorney R.F. Chaloner said it would be unfair "to say the whole thing can be put down to naivete." The Crown, however, did not allege there was any intent on Black's part to steal.

Typical quotes from the letters, submitted by Smith, had Black as a "dedicated teacher", "committed to the betterment of others", and "he is a highly regarded man in his community".

"A rather overwhelming show of support for this man in need," said Smith.

"The facts show he and his family have suffered greatly," observed Judge Sutherland, "not only because it was published in the community but because of the financial loss."

Judge Sutherland found Black guilty of theft over \$200 after the accused pleaded guilty in a December 4 court appearance.

Ontario Provincial Police laid charges in February following complaints by cattle owner Jack Arthur Stansbury that a number of his cattle were missing from the Black farm where they were being tended.

Three civil court actions have been launched. Smith indicated that none of the funds from the sale of cattle—about \$160,000—profited Black. All the money went into the farm operation.

Black, 44, has taught in Acton schools for 23 years. One of the two Black farms—which have been in the family for 155 years—has had to be sold. High interest rates have delayed the sale of the other property.

"I'm satisfied this man will not be before the courts, other than the civil courts," said the judge.

"Normally a breach of trust case would call for a prison term. However, I can see no advantage to the accused or community."

The judge added to the suspended sentence and probation term that Black continue in his present employment if possible.



The spirit of Christmas shines on these children's smiling faces. These youngsters performed the nativity scene at a recent St. Alban's Anglican Church Christmas service. The children pictured here are Brian McCallum, Brydon Gilliss, Steve Robson, Scott McKee, Kevin Grubbe, Kevin Priestman, Carolyne Forte, Bryan Creasey, Patricia Pearce, Melanie Cook, Kevin Tybce, Scott Oliver, Sherri Owens, Emma Commander, Matthew Ginn, Laura Masales, Tracy Haggelt, Diana Frehs and Tara Gibson. Photo by GORD MURRAY

### No gas from dump: report

There was no leak of potentially explosive methane gas from the closed Acton dump when it was tested by the province in October. The province, however, recommends more precautionary tests.

"In effect this is not a site having significant impact on health concerns," Martin Wood of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's waste management branch said Thursday in reference to the Churchill Road South dump.

Government testers found no vegetation stress, no leachate and "we were not able to detect any methane gas at all from drill holes," Wood said. Leachate is liquid which percolates through the garbage.

Wood indicated that because of the possibility of methane gas moving horizontally underground toward the three apartment buildings on Churchill Road, the ministry recommends further testing "to tell if anything is happening."

Old dump sites contain decomposing garbage which can generate methane, a colorless, odorless gas which in mixtures of between five and 15 per cent with air can explode.

The report, which is being sent to Halton Hills council recommends the inserting of 12 pipes into the ground between the dump and the apartment

buildings, said Wood.

Portable sniffers can be used if the report's recommendations are followed, to detect the presence of methane. Wood indicated the report urges that the pipes be checked for at least one season.

The pattern of gas flow, according to Wood, changes with the seasons. In warm weather, gas can escape into the open air.

In winter, however, gas can be trapped underground by the crust of frozen earth. Then the gas can move underground to seek another escape.

The recommendation for the pipes to be inserted is "really a precautionary matter," said Wood.

"Our concern is if it moves horizontally, it can get into basements. Concentrations of methane gas between five and 15 per cent can be explosive," said Wood.

"If gas is discovered," Wood said, "there are remedial technologies."

The ministry also tested in the direction of Longfield Road, said Wood.

The report had one further recommendation, that the boundary of the dump be more accurately defined so it can be marked on official plans.

Wood hinted that municipalities would be expected to cover the cost of venting their dumps.



ABC chairman Bill Coats presents Anita Ockenden with her prize for having the most welcoming door at Christmas in Acton. More on the contest inside.