

Halton suggests tough action on drunk drivers

Drivers who refuse to undergo a police administered breathalyzer test should pay a stiff penalty of six months in jail says regional council.

That was one of a lengthy list of recommendations of the provincial and federal governments from Halton Region as it joined the growing battle against drunk driving.

After a forceful debate council approved the recommendations put forward by outgoing Medical Officer of Health Dr. Peter Cole and added an additional recom-

mendation that regional police be given more funds to wage campaigns against impaired driving.

"The most abused drug is alcohol," said Burlington Councillor Walter Mulkwich who warned that impaired drivers are "lethal weapons". He said alcohol abuse is a pervasive social problem. Fifty per cent of all fatal accidents involve its use and 30 per cent of all hospital costs going towards treatment of alcohol-related problems, he said.

The proposals included:

- a one-year licence suspension for impaired driving and a lifetime suspension for a further offence.
- that all alcoholic beverages be labelled "the excessive use of this substance is harmful to your health," much like cigarette packages.
- that the provincial government spend more money to promote moderation with alcohol and safer driving.
- that the Liquor Licence Board stop allowing happy hours in taverns.

Not all councillors agreed with the tough

stance taken by council though there was no disputing that impaired driving is a problem that needs more effective prevention.

Burlington Councillor Rob Forbes said existing laws are tough enough. Police just need more money so that they can increase surveillance and catch more drunk drivers, he said.

He objected to longer suspension sentences because those who rely on driving for work and are convicted will be deprived of a livelihood.

"The social cost of this will be enormous," he predicted.

Countered Oakville Councillor Peter Arch, "If they rely on driving for a living then certainly they shouldn't be drinking and driving."

Burlington Councillor Joan Little states it is vital to create a stronger deterrent to those who might drink and drive. The problem is mounting in lives lost, property destroyed, and medical costs, she said.

"As an OHIP ratepayer I am sick to death of subsidizing it," she said.

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'Gibber' tells how he was Czeched by secret police

Former local sports editor Denis Gibbons, now news editor of the Burlington Post, had visited Eastern Europe without hassle three times before (Soviet Union twice and Czechoslovakia once) on hockey tours. But on the first day he arrived in Sumperk, Czechoslovakia with the Burlington midjet Cougars this year, he was escorted to the local police station by a plainclothes agent of the Czech secret police, had two rolls of film taken away from him and, three days later, was questioned by local police for two hours about the purpose of his visit to Sumperk.

Sumperk is the site of a Soviet army base, which includes 5,000 soldiers. Although there are 100,000 Soviet soldiers in Czechoslovakia, they are concentrated in about a half-dozen towns and cities. Denis presents a first-person account of his unusual experiences in Sumperk.

by DENIS GIBBONS

On previous visits to the east, I've been accustomed to chatting with both Soviet and Czech soldiers, using the Russian I studied during evening courses at McMaster University. The topic has always been hockey and I've found most of them eager to kick around the usual trivia like—"Who is the world's best player, Gretzky or Fetisov?" and "When will Trelak retire?"

But I discovered the atmosphere changes when you're near a military base and you're carrying two cameras.

We'd already been in Czechoslovakia for four days and had played games in the Bohemian region of the country near Prague. Sumperk, a town of 30,000 in northern Moravia near the Polish border, was to be our home for the next six days while Cougars played in a tournament there.

The morning after we arrived, I set out on my usual solo tour through the town, snapping shots of stores, shoppers, churches, etc., when I met a few Soviet soldiers not far from the military base which is less than two miles from the town centre. We'd been talking for a while about the performance of this year's Moscow Central Army hockey team, when I was approached by a plainclothes officer of the Czech secret police who presented his credentials and politely asked to see my passport. I replied that my passport was at the Hotel Grand and further explained that I had taken no photos of military installations and had no intention of doing so.

But the officer said I would have to accompany him in his car to the hotel. We arrived at an intersection near the hotel when he suddenly told me that we would be going directly to the local police station instead.

Doing my best to keep cool, I continued to make various requests which included permission to go to the hotel and show my passport first and a chance to call the hotel and ask to speak to our group interpreter.

We'd been at the police station about 15 minutes debating the matter when he finally agreed to drive me to the hotel and get my passport. A lady at the desk, who spoke very good English, explained to me that they suspected I had taken photos of military objects and that if I turned over the film from both cameras, the matter would be finished. I handed over the films and the officer put them in a special envelope marked that they should be returned to me, providing I was telling the truth.

He left and I hurried off to the Sumperk arena where the opening ceremonies of the tournament were about to begin, a little shaken but confident I had committed no crime.

Two days later, I was having lunch at the hotel with the Canadian consul-general Darcy Thorpe, who had made a special trip from Prague to support Cougars in the tournament. I got up from the table to



DENIS GIBBONS
On hockey junket

retrieve the latest copy of the Hockey News, which the Trail B.C. native had requested for afternoon reading.

As I passed through the hotel lobby on the way to my room, I was surprised to meet the same plainclothesman who had picked me up two days before. He told me he now had an official interpreter available and asked me to come with him to his car, which was parked about a block away. Thinking as quickly as I could, I said I'd be happy to discuss the matter further with him, but where we were standing in the lobby, not down the street.

He agreed. And, so while he fetched the interpreter I naturally ran for Darcy. Credentials were exchanged and Darcy demanded that if I were being accused of taking photos of military installations, they should produce the evidence—namely the two rolls of film. They replied that they weren't able to develop the particular brand of North American film quickly, they were just doing their job and that at the moment it was just my word against theirs. When I explained that I was scheduled to leave the country a week later, they did agree to return the films through the consul-general, if they were okay.

Chapter 3 of this episode opened just as politely as the others when I bumped into the officer in the hotel lobby after breakfast two days later. This time, he said, they

needed me at the local police station for about 10 minutes just to sign papers to say the matter was concluded.

Our interpreter wasn't around, so I made sure the biggest guy in our group, Frank Buchanan, knew where I was going.

This time I was taken upstairs in the police station to an office which is as modern as any I've seen in the western world and told that under Czech law I was required to answer questions. I asked for permission to call the consul-general, who by now had returned to Prague, but was told it would be possible only after questioning.

While I sat nervously in an armchair, I was questioned for the next two hours by an authority, dressed in civilian clothes. The questions, which were asked in Czech, were relayed to me through a lady interpreter who gave the answers back to the authority. He then dictated them to a second lady who transcribed the whole dialogue (questions and answers) onto a typewriter.

Questions concerned the purpose of my visit to Czechoslovakia and Sumperk, in particular, my street encounter with the Soviet soldiers and my previous experience in visiting eastern Europe. The questioning was firm, but during the two hours I was allowed to visit the washroom twice unescorted and to contact our group interpreter, who by now had returned to the hotel.

Our man told me on the phone that he was not allowed to come down and represent me, that I would have to remain there alone until the questioning was over. It finally ended and the interpreter explained that I would have to wait a few more minutes for the decision to be reached.

That was the biggest problem with the whole episode. Although everything was properly done and I never had a hand laid on me, just when I thought things were getting rosier, something else cropped up.

But this time the news was good. The phone rang, the authority answered and as the interpreter eavesdropped, she nodded assuringly to me. I was told that protocol had ended and I could go unescorted.

That was my last face-to-face contact with Czech police, although I was told I was watched closely by agents in Opava and Prague later.

Colonel Bill Grant, military attache at the Canadian Embassy in Prague, was interested in my case and we discussed it for a half-hour when I arrived at the Czech capital.

Colonel Grant said he had been to Sumperk before himself and never had any problem. But he added he could understand why Soviet military personnel would be suspicious about a Canadian with two cameras draped around his neck talking to Soviet soldiers in their language near an army base.

In the long run, the colonel suggested, I was very lucky, even though I had committed no crime. In a small town like Sumperk which doesn't attract a lot of western visitors, he pointed out police aren't used to having anyone ask for representation or permission to make phone calls when they're picked up. The secret police also watch the activity of locals, who are usually afraid of the consequences if they protest when stopped.

The only things missing from the story now are two rolls of film. And only time will tell if they show up.



Pete Pomeroy was sworn in as Halton Regional Chairman on Wednesday by Judge J. Scime at regional headquarters in Oakville, and thereby ended five years as Mayor of Halton Hills.

Landfill drama

Burlington site still choice for dump

Regional Chairman Pete Pomeroy vowed solid waste management would be his number one concern before he took over as Halton's chief executive. Shortly after taking office Wednesday that political hot potato was dropped right into his hands.

Council took about three hours to decide it was going to stick to its guns and push for a continuation of the Burlington landfill site as Halton's interim waste disposal option despite a serious roadblock set up by Ontario's Minister of the Environment, Andy Brandt.

On December 1, Brandt turned down the region's request that environmental hearings for the expansion be waived. He ruled that whichever option it selected—continuation or shipping garbage to a New York energy from waste facility via a transfer station at the Burlington site—hearings must be held under the Environmental Protection Act.

He also ruled that whatever its choice, Halton should submit a detailed application by January 14, a deadline regional staff say will be impossible to meet.

As at its November 9 meeting council decided to push for the continuation option because of the expense of exporting waste to New York.

"It's presumptuous to say that most people support the export option," said Pomeroy. "I'm certainly not willing to spend \$13-million to truck (garbage) to an EFW plant in New York state."

Though council is firm in its resolve, over the objections of Burlington councillors Roly Bird, Walter Mulkwich and Rob Forbes, the clock is running down in the region's bid to find a way of disposing of its waste until a long-term landfill site is chosen and has its scheduled opening in the summer of 1988.

The Burlington site will fill up to its approved limits at the end of July and council was told its application for the continuation of the site will not be ready until mid-March. Pomeroy will contact Brandt to request a deadline expansion for applications.

Burlington city council is opposed to the expansion as are neighbours of the site and a ratepayers group. This will certainly lengthen the tribunal process and increase legal costs.

Chief Administrative Officer Dennis Perlin also warned that this confrontation could end up delaying the environmental assessment on the long-term landfill component as well.

The Burlington opponents favour the New York Export option but because it will cost an estimated \$13.9-million over three years and will itself involve environmental hearings, council has ruled it out.

As well, the energy from waste station in New York would only offer to wait for a commitment from Halton until January 1, and with the necessity for hearings the region would only be able to start shipping waste around July 1, said Perlin.

Region land study says town has erred

Halton Hills should set less ambitious goals for rural industrial land use and instead direct its efforts to increasing its supply of lands for urban industry says a report just released by the region.

The consultants report also suggests the town has erred in its new official plan by concentrating lands open to rural industry in areas it considers only fair for that purpose.

The Rural Industrial Lands Needs Study was presented to the region's planning committee last week by Carolyn Kearns of Peter Barnard Associates, who said the intensive four-month study aimed "to be realistic and to allow (Halton) to compete in the Greater Toronto Area."

Halton Hills currently has 650 acres designated rural industrial along the north side of Hwy. 401 and on the east side of Hwy. 25, north of Five Sideroad. According to the study this far exceeds a projected need of only 100 acres up to the year 2011, which is in addition to 180 acres presently used for rural industries.

In stark contrast the report states, "Halton Hills has immediate requirements for urban land as existing supplies are already below established requirements."

The town will need 585 acres of additional urban land over the next 27 years the report says and it adds that the existing 400 acres proposed for an urban industrial designation under the extended Georgetown urban boundary extension is a good start.

Town planner, Ian Keith, has yet to see the final version of the study but said when

questioned about it, "I think the study is a competent one, but we will have to do a thorough investigation of it before commenting on its findings."

The study says the two areas designated rural industrial by the town are only fair for that purpose, primarily because they are located on prime agricultural land.

It suggests instead that the best area is along Hwy. 7 and Trafalgar Rd., north and west of Georgetown. It is ideal, states the report, because it is on poor farm land, is adjacent to a major transportation artery and is close to municipal water services.

The report says the town should consider utilizing the Hwy. 401 corridor for urban industry, but states it won't be needed until after the turn of the century when growth starts to extend beyond south Halton and Peel Region.

Urban industry, the study notes, will be the major client for land in the region accounting for 95 per cent of the total. Burlington and Oakville will capture the lion's share.

"Halton Hills' demand will be constrained somewhat by its competitive disadvantages in the region," it says which include a small labor pool and supply of business service relative to other municipalities in the area, plus the distance of its urban areas from freeways.



Halton Hills swim staff demonstrated underwater artificial resuscitation at the annual water show held at Acton Lions pool Friday night.



The sixth annual Halton Hills Christmas Water Show was held at the Acton Lions pool Friday night and swimmers showed off their skills.