

# Police records 'inadequate'; may computerize

By LORI TAYLOR  
Herald Staff Writer  
Halton Regional Police may convert to a computer system for their central records, but they have to straighten out their present records system first.  
The records system was itself the subject of a large section of a report on the force

filed by the Ontario Police Commission (OPC) last year. The report described the records section as being "poorly conceived, and ... inadequately administered and supervised."  
Although the police commission has had studies conducted to discuss methods of improving the records system, any

major changes in the manual system have been postponed until it can be determined whether the force can switch directly to a computer system. Chief James Harding told the commission Thursday that research conducted by the force has indicated Halton should delay in adopting the computer system until other forces have completed their studies. He suggested that if any of the five other Ontario police forces considering computer records systems proceed with their implementation, Halton could benefit by studying their systems.  
Neil McKinnon, head of the Ontario Police Commission's technical services branch, made a presentation to the commission Thursday, and said that although the OPC's consultants are now busy working with other forces converting to computers, they would be willing to help conduct a feasibility study in the future.

"I would like to see you get your manual system in order first," Mr. McKinnon said. "Even with the computers, you'll still have some elements of the manual system."  
LOCAL ONLY  
Were the Halton force to install a computer system, it would be a local system only, with connections to the provincial system, Mr. McKinnon said.  
Chief Harding suggested that the commission was mixing apples and oranges by trying to talk about two different systems at once.  
"Let's get one system organized, let's get one system started before we start worrying about the next one," the

chief said "I can't see mixing the two systems now."  
The commission decided to ask the OPC to put Halton on its priority list to have a consultant study the feasibility of Halton going into a computer records system. The members also approved a request by administrator George McMorris for equipment costing about \$21,000, which would allow the manual system to continue until such

time as a decision was made on the computer system.  
Sgt. Norm Ryall, public relations officer for the force, said after the meeting that the records system has been allowed to stagnate since the

formation of the regional force. He attributed the problem in part to the fact that each area police force had its own records system prior to regionalization. The central records system wasn't set up

to give back information or statistics, he said.  
"We've outgrown the space and we've outgrown the equipment," Sgt. Ryall said. "We have to re-design the system with a look to the future."

## Undecided on uniform design

Halton Regional Police will be continuing studies of police uniforms in order to choose uniform dress for all officers.

The force started an experiment last year with a new style of patrol jacket which was to be tested under different weather conditions. However, although the jackets were ordered in May, they did not arrive until December, and thus have not been tested during summer weather.

Halton officers are presently wearing tunics with a Sam Brown holster, which is worn around the waist with a strap crossing over the chest. The tunic is worn year round, with a patrol jacket in cold weather.

Chief James Harding said Thursday his own preference is for Sam Browns and tunics "especially for some occasions, but it can be very uncomfortable, especially sitting in the cruiser, when the sun tends to ride up."

"Our Halton police officers look smart in our uniforms,

and it's a source of pride and good morale for the men," the chief added.

Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett, chairman of the commission, said when he was in Mississauga during the evacuation crisis, the Peel police officers were dressed in a variety of uniforms which made it confusing for the public.

The commission received a report from Inspector M. MacPherson evaluating the patrol jackets being used on an experimental basis. The report also contained recommendations for changes in design of the jackets to make them more comfortable and to provide greater mobility.

The commission decided to receive and file the report from Inspector MacPherson, and to follow the chief's recommendation that Inspector MacPherson not only continue evaluating the patrol jackets, but also collect information on uniforms from other forces.

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