

Police acknowledge 50% rise in shoplifting here

By ASTRA PAPE
Herald Special
Shoplifting has always been an ongoing concern of merchants in Halton Hills but is fast becoming a major threat as police report a 50 per cent increase this year.

Halton regional police Inspector Matt MacPherson said he couldn't account for the dramatic increase. "It's hard to say whether the stores are policing better or whether there's more shoplifting."

Comments from merchants in Halton Hills regarding the incidence of shoplifting in their stores ranged from "no increase" to "definitely on the increase". Overall, the larger retailers such as Zellers, Canadian Tire and the food stores report increases.

Halton Hills merchants differ in their views on the incidence of shoplifting and methods of curbing it, but officials of the legal system are all too aware of the problem

Most merchants said it's difficult to estimate how much merchandise they're losing to shoplifters. Zellers general manager Gord Finney said the money the store does lose to shoplifting is included in the price of the merchandise. "The honest customer ends up paying the price."

But Murray Lawton, owner of Canadian Tire in Georgetown, disagreed. "There's no way a merchant, especially in a chain store, can accommodate losses due to shoplifting." The prices are

already set and any losses will come out of the store's profits, he said.

Stores are waging an ongoing battle to nab shoplifters and perhaps even deter the potential shoplifter. Some stores reported that they are upgrading their existing security to combat the increase.

Security can vary from cameras and undercover personnel strolling through the stores to sales clerks keeping a watchful eye. Mr. Finney said Zellers has five undercover people on staff.

but that salespeople are instructed to be on the lookout too.

At Fraser, owner of Shopper's Drug Mart, said it's difficult for smaller, independently-owned businesses to maintain such extensive security. The big franchises can afford to employ their own people, he said, while he has to hire outside surveillance companies.

"Those people can cost up to \$9 an hour. And it only pays off if they recover a lot." But the deterrent effect, he added, can't be measured.

Most stores have a tough policy with the shoplifters they do catch. They no longer issue a warning the first time but charge every offender they catch. "We're not doing any favors by warning them," Mr. Lawton said.

The penalty for shoplifting convictions can range from a conditional discharge to imprisonment. Inspector MacPherson said that persons charged with shoplifting items under \$200 could get either a conditional discharge or up to two years imprisonment. For items

over \$200, the sentence could be up to ten years. "But I've never heard of anyone getting ten years," he said.

Assistant Crown Attorney Anthony Vale said first offenders who are young and did it perhaps on a whim will usually get a conditional discharge and probation with no criminal record. If the act appears to be premeditated, they most likely will get a \$100 to \$150 fine. Older offenders get a fine and a criminal record unless there are mitigating circumstances.

Mr. Vale said most young people who make mistakes learn their lesson but, he added, there are many who come back again.

Contrary to what the public thinks, the average shoplifter is not a teenager, taking something on a dare. Mr. Vale said there are no age, racial or class barriers. Shoplifters come from every walk of life.

Mr. Lawton said he has found shoplifters to be anywhere from six to 80 years old but said they are most often over 18.

He disagreed that people shoplift because they may actually need the item saying the majority they've apprehended weren't in dire straits. "They all have the money to pay for it, they just don't want to part with it for that particular product. We haven't caught one yet who was broke." In some cases, he found, "it's definitely some kind of compulsion."

Georgetown psychiatrist Dr. Brian Jordan said for some people, shoplifting can be a neurotic thing. He said shoplifters usually fall into

two different groups: those who get a certain thrill and excitement out of shoplifting and those who are depressed, often suicidal and shoplift to bring attention to themselves. "They actually want to get caught," he said.

Staff Sergeant Les Graham said he realizes that for some, shoplifting can be an illness but said most offenders don't fit into that category.

Merchants and police agree on one point. Habitual shoplifters do get caught in the end. Sgt. Graham said the merchants are losing far too much money and are therefore coming up with better security systems to stop it. "How many times shoplifters get away with it is anybody's guess, but eventually they do get caught."

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Park damage already over \$4,000 - town

By ANIPEDEIAN
Herald Staff Writer
Halton Hills parks have only been open a month and already there's been \$4,000 damage done to them by vandals.

Glass mirrors in the men's and women's bathrooms were smashed May 4 at the Georgetown Fairgrounds.

At the Hornby Park, bikers burned grass and left tire marks which will cost \$700 to repair.

At Acton's Prospect Park, the blockhouse door lock costing \$60 has already been replaced three times by the recreation department.

Since the picnic tables were put out for the public's enjoyment in April, six have been smashed. They each cost \$100.

Last week, a picnic shelter put up last summer had its roof bent out of shape and three picnic tables were floated down Silver Creek at Cedarvale park in Georgetown.

Facts like these concern the town's public works and recreation departments.

"It's become a serious problem," public works superintendent Frank Morette said. "Vandalism seems to be on the increase."

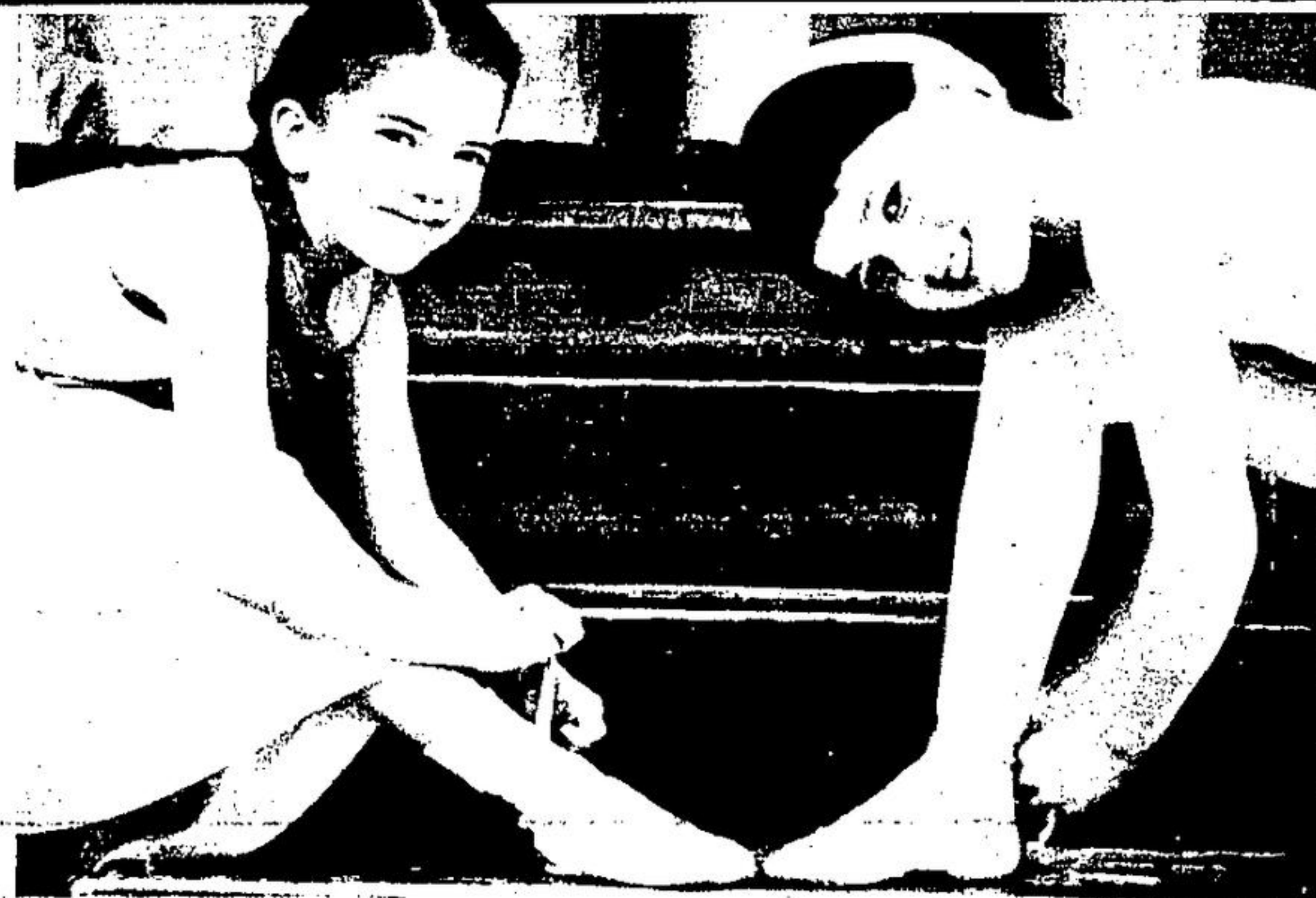
For the first time ever, the town is going to keep tabs on spending forced by vandalism, recreation co-ordinator Joy Gwilliam told The Herald.

She said she has asked for heavier patrols of the 44 parks by Halton regional police.

Last fall, a new timer lighting system was installed at Cedarvale Park and shortly after vandalized. Mr. Morette said the \$1,200 system was salvaged by an electrician.

"There's a lot of power there and they could have killed somebody," he said. "We were really concerned about that because it would be a liability against the town if somebody

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LOOK OUT, KAREN KAIN! (Herald photo by Chris Aagaard)

Two Halton Hills youngsters, Jennifer Kinnear, 8 (left) and Sarah Broughton, 9, received a rare and welcome honor recently, passing stringent dance exams set up by the Royal Academy of Dancing in London, England. The two, in the primary and second

Committee recommends fall referendum Disarmament gets a chance

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer
When Halton Hills residents head for the polls this fall, there's a good chance the election ballots will have an extra item of major importance to the rest of the world as well.

The town's general committee Monday night supported the idea of a local referendum on world-wide "general disarmament" if the province or the courts can settle questions about whether the referendum can be a legal part of the elections.

Georgetown resident Janet Duval asked the committee to do what 25 other municipalities across Canada have already done and include the disarmament question on the ballot slips. The suggested referendum question proposed by Operation Dismantle, a Canadian group which advocates a global referendum on the nuclear armaments issue, asks "Do you support the goal of general disarmament and mandate your government to negotiate with other governments the balanced steps (that would lead to that goal)?"

"The only way to fight a nuclear war is to prevent it," Mrs. Duval told the committee, reminding members that major cities such as Ottawa and Vancouver will ask their residents during the next municipal election if they support the concept of general disarmament. Last Thursday, Toronto city councillors voted 21-1 in favor of asking a similar question, although the Toronto referendum will specify nuclear disarmament as opposed to a general arms reduction.

In addition, Toronto councillors have called on the province to settle the legal confusion surrounding the referendum proposal. As underlined in a recently published article for "Municipal World" magazine, there is doubt about how constitutional a disarmament referendum connected with a municipal election would be.

Coun. Harry Levy's recommendation, which is expected to be approved by council next week, concurred with Mrs. Duval's request to pass bylaws necessary to hold the referendum, provided the referendum is deemed legal by the province or the courts. Town clerk-administrator Ken Richardson said referendum by-laws would have to be passed by September at the latest.

Superpowers, Mrs. Duval stressed, must negotiate to "equally reduce (their) capability to annihilate the world in their war efforts."

She pointed out that city solicitors for Ottawa have determined that the referendum would be legal, in their opinion, since it does not interfere with provincial legislative functions.

Coun. Ross Knechtel questioned why Operation Dismantle hasn't concerned itself with the legal doubts which appear to be a complication for municipalities considering the referendum proposal.

"Some people on this council might say this is not a municipal matter," Mrs. Duval noted. "However, warheads are targeted at cities and towns and if Toronto were hit, we could be blinded and burned or left to die slowly from radiation sickness."

The referendum would allow an open forum for residents to voice their approval or objections to a disarmament scheme, she said, adding that the referendum is intended to

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CLEAN-UP'S A CINCH WHEN CUBS ARE AROUND

Doing their part to keep Ontario beautiful, Limestone Cubs (left to right) James Dewsnap, William Fry, Ian Johnston, Jason Medland and Randy Teller spent a big chunk of their regular meeting night last week collecting litter along Regional Road 43. See page A9. (Photo by Jean Layman)

Budget battles Let's talk, trustees tell councillors

By ANIPEDEIAN
Herald Staff Writer
The invitations are out. In response to negative criticism from Oakville and Halton Hills council chambers and Burlington and Oakville chambers of commerce, the Halton board of education has issued invitations to members of these groups to attend an information meeting May 25 at the board office in which the 1982 school budget will be explained.

The \$132 million budget, which is 13.7 per cent larger than last year's, has caused a great furor in Halton.

Board chairman Len Auger said the extra meetings were set up because councillors hadn't been able to come to the board's finance committee meetings from January through March because of a conflict of schedules. The finance committee, responsible for authoring the budget, happened to meet Monday nights, which also happens to be the night most councillors hold their meetings.

"The meeting is not open to the public or the press.

Is it too late to change the budget for 1982? Mr. Auger says yes.

"It's too late for the budget, but these groups are interested in the process of coming up with a budget) and what the board is doing for next year," he said. "Local councillors don't appreciate the amount of work and complexities required to put a budget together."

Calling for more understanding between the councillors, businessmen and the board, Mr. Auger said that before any changes could be made to the budget, the board would have to rescind their motion approving it. Then alone it could go to the finance committee for review.

However, Mr. Auger doesn't think it will come to that once the parties involved get together.

"Because the local municipalities collect the taxes, they want to be sure that the public knows that the board is responsible for raising the taxes," Mr. Auger said. "It's all part of their campaign."

"They're putting the blame where it rightly should be," he said, admitting that trustees were not entirely happy with the 1982 budget as they passed it, because of the 13.3 per cent increase in mill rate that would result.

THANK YOU, GEORGETOWN!

\$34,000

\$33,000

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LAND OF THE GIANTS?

Rising like characters from Johnathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels", railway buffs viewed the enormous and intricate model railroad display at the Georgetown Public Library Friday night and Saturday. The display, which is operated by members of the Georgetown Model Railway Club, functions with the same precision as a real railway yard and operators were careful not to route trains on collision courses. Most of the space in the library's gallery was taken up by the display which featured plaster landforms, bridges, railway crossing and was smoothly run by club members.

(Herald photo by Chris Aagaard)

Acton town hall issue alive thanks to persistent backers

The Actario and the Acton town hall restoration committee show no signs of easing up on a campaign to save the century-old former town hall from demolition and, backed by a lawyer, they intend to once again confront council with the issue.

The committees have been running ads in The Herald recently questioning town council's April 5 decision to draft a bylaw stripping the building of its historical designation and eventually tearing down the structure for a parking lot. The proposed bylaw, which has also been advertised in the newspaper, will be considered for a third and final reading later this month.

While he declined to give details, Actario chairman Ted Tyler told The Herald Monday that the committees have jointly engaged a solicitor to prepare "an official objection" to council's stand. He said the lawyer's presentation would come within a week or two, but would not elaborate on its content until the town's clerk-administrator and councillors have seen it first.

The building was up for sale for a month and the Actario and restoration committees proposed purchasing it from the town for \$1. They hoped to at least bring the building up to provincial fire and building code standards, as well strengthen its deteriorating exterior. Members from both committees have joined Acton councillors to stress that the hall could provide much-needed office space for the regional and local municipalities.