

Police Week: Beyond The Uniform

Chief looks ahead to future of policing optimistically

By CHERYL MOODER
Herald Staff

Members of the Halton Regional Police Force do not regard the future with fear, but rather as an adventure land.

Mount Everest has been climbed, the Everglades have been explored and the source of the Amazon has been discovered, said Chief of Police James Harding. "But no one has been into the future. That is for us all."



Chief James Harding

Having the courage to face the future is one thing the chief tells the new recruits, who join one of the best forces in the world.

The force's philosophy, which hangs on the police chief's office wall, states: "My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there."

These words dictate the force operates and helps to keep the future of Halton's police force exciting.

Keeping the Halton region force ranked as one of the top policing bodies is the result of a combination of factors, the police chief said.

First off, the force hires bright, energetic and intelligent recruits to man their stations.

Police officers, who are sparkling with enthusiasm, are dynamic and comprise an exciting organization to bring the police force into the future, Chief Harding said.

The strategies and policing philosophies, which govern the Halton force, also help make the region police special.

Halton's force reacts to the needs of the community in a preventative, proactive and reactive way, the chief said. Fifty per cent of its resource time is dedicated to preventative policing.

This results in a safer region to live in, Chief Harding said. The crime rate has dropped a greater degree in Halton Region than in all of Canada, he said.

Community-based policing encourages members of the communities to become actively involved as volunteers, and to participate in the setting of priorities as to where policing activities should be directed through the development of programs.

The Halton force keeps its eyes to the future, implementing modern technology as it becomes available.

For example, in past years, the Halton Region has computerized its records, has a computerized dispatch system and is installing mobile display terminals into police cars, the chief said.

The police use computers to give back parcels of time that can be used more wisely by the force, he said.

Halton's police force is dedicated to the total well being of police officers. "Seventy per cent of the force is involved in personal fitness," Chief Harding said. "When an officer is fit he does not have to be a burden on fellow officers."

Policing networks around the world are so taken with the structure and workings of the Halton force, they send their leaders to Canada to study it.

The commanders have read about the Halton experience and want to take a look at the ingredients, which have gone into making the force what it is, and will take these ideas back to their own forces, Chief Harding said.

Halton will host visitors from Australia and New Zealand forces who will study what they do, and it recently had visitors over from England.

Chief Harding plans to keep improving the relationship between the



Andrew Fleicher of the Halton Regional Police Force's Tactical Rescue Unit displays some of the department's heavy equipment during the Police Week demonstration

at Burlington Mall last Saturday. The TRU is housed in Milton and responds to emergency and crisis situations. (Herald photo)

public and police force in the upcoming years.

When you involve the community aspect of policing and have a joint venture with the public, you maintain a safer environment in which to live, he said.

By measuring the amount of public support the force has thus far received, the police chief said he

feels it can achieve this task.

Halton's police chief lives by a quote by Sir Robert Peel, which states: Policing is a part of, not a part from, the public.

"It is up to us to take the police force into the future," he said. "In doing so it must remain flexible and versatile in order to best serve the public."



Dennis Gibbons, a reporter with the Burlington Post, received a media award for best police editorial from Deputy Chief John Barratt. Former Herald reporters Ani Pederian and Sandy Campbell received an honorable mention for

their police news stories. The awards was presented to numerous reporters and citizens by the Halton Regional Police force Wednesday night during the 15th Annual Awards Night at the Nassagaweya Community Centre.

Region pushes for control of police commission

A move to bring the police commission into the Regional fold by making it an elected body has passed the first hurdle.

Halton's Administration and Finance Committee decided May 11 to ask the solicitor-general of Ontario to "review the pattern of governance of police commissions and their current suitability."

The motion was initiated by Oakville Councillor John Graham who wants the current system abolished.

Right now the police commission consists of two regional councillors and three appointed citizens.

The Police Commission sets the budget and council cannot formally reject it. Halton Region can only appeal the commission's budget to the Ontario Police Commission, which Coun. Graham says, has never been decided in favor of the politicians on budget issues.

Coun. Graham became involved in a heated debate with Halton Police Chief James Harding last month when Chief Harding strongly disagreed with Coun. Graham's initiative.

Coun. Graham was angry with the nine per cent increase in the police budget this year.

"Councillors who are accountable for a budget must surely be responsible for it as well," said Coun. Graham.

"There must be somebody in Halton which can arbitrate the competing demands for services and

fundings. Having the police commission made up of elected councillors is proposed as a major improvement over present practice," he added.

"The police commission, as it has been set up, is no longer necessary in Ontario, if it ever was."

Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller, who sits on the Administration and Finance Committee, agrees with the proposal to give politicians more control over the police force's \$25 million budget.

"I'm in full agreement of it," said Mayor Miller.

Mayor Miller said he probably would have voted for the police budget if he were given a vote on it, but politicians are upset at not having more control over the budget.

"We've been saying this for many years now," said Mayor Miller.

The Mayor said it is important to have "first class" police protection but council doesn't like "rubber stamping" the budget.

"We're looked upon as being responsible for it," he said.

Boating deaths on the decline

Last year, 43 people died in 32 separate fatal boating accidents on waterways patrolled by the Ontario Provincial Police. In 1986, 55 people died in 48 boating accidents, while in 1985, 100 people died.

"The reduction in fatalities shows that the OPP Marine Awareness program works," said Provincial Marine Awareness Coordinator S/Sgt. Larry Smith.

The OPP Marine Awareness program is a two-prong approach consisting of safe boating education combined with vigorous law enforcement.

"In 1987, OPP Marine patrols checked 33,521 boats. 58 people were charged with impaired boating and 687 were charged with other liquor law offences," said S/Sgt. Smith. "Safe boaters wear life jackets and refrain from drinking alcohol while on the waterways."

Last year, 2,184 people were charged and 6,913 issued warnings for violating safety and shipping act regulations.

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