

Halton crime rate tumbles by 10.5%

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Halton Police Chief Gary Crowell attributed part of the property crime rate decrease to special enforcement initiatives targeting auto theft as well as the cumulation of Project DISH, a joint forces operation that led to the dismantling of crime groups that had been responsible for dozens of residential and commercial break and enters in the GTA.

Taking the region's population growth into account, the property crime rate decreased 10.8 per cent.

The region's overall crime rate was down 10.5 per cent from last year.

Specifically 1,225 fewer criminal offences occurred in Halton last year (14,043) compared to (15,268) in 2008.

"When a community that is already as safe as Halton shows this kind of decline in criminal offences, it speaks volumes about how effectively everyone, including the police, the public and our community partners, are working together for public safety," said Crowell. "Because Halton's population is growing so rapidly, analyzing crime rate data gives us a true year-over-year comparison which we use to identify emerging crime trends."

For instance, he said, based on motor vehicle collision rates and community feedback, Crowell made traffic safety one of the Service's key policing priorities when he became chief in 2006.

By using a combined approach of enforcement, education and working with regional municipality road engineering departments,

2009 saw some tangible improvements in road safety in the region."

The number of fatal collisions plummeted by 40 per cent from 15 in 2008 to nine last year. Injury collision totals decreased 8.5 per cent and property damage collisions went down 12.5 per cent. The number of impaired drivers arrested on local roads increased by 3.6 per cent, from 390 to 404 and there were 448 temporary driving license suspensions issued in 2009.

"Fortunately last year fewer people were injured or killed on Halton roads, but even

one serious injury accident or fatality is too many," said Crowell. "Motorists can continue to do their part by buckling up, slowing down and keeping a careful eye out for pedestrians."

Violent crime rate in Halton was down 6.7 per cent, and the rate for other crimes, such as prostitution, offensive weapons and bail violations dropped by 12.2 per cent.

There was only one homicide in Halton in both 2009 and 2008; however, the number of attempted murders decreased to two from four.

The summary below reports the number of criminal incidents, not charges, as some crimes might result in multiple charges. The statistics show increases/decreases in 2009 compared to 2008:

- Arson:** +11.7% (105, up from 94)
- Have Stolen Goods:** +10.4% (213, up from 193)
- Auto Theft:** -32.7% (538, down from 799)
- Sexual Assault:** -2.7% (107, down from 110)
- Non-sexual Assault:** -0.4% (1,579, down from 1,585)
- Robbery:** -21.3% (100, down from 127)
- Other Violent Crime:** -10.9% (531, down from 596)
- Break and Enter:** -11.1% (1,303, down from 1,465)
- Theft Under \$5,000:** -8.4% (4,799, down from 5,238)
- Theft Over \$5,000:** -1.8% (107, down from 109)
- Fraud:** -1.5% (1,343, down from 1,363)
- Offensive Weapons:** -14.6% (88, down from 103)
- Other Criminal Code:** -12.1% (1,085, down from 1,234)
- Mischief:** -4.9% (2,094, down from 2,201)



Most 'hate crimes' acts of graffiti

Three-quarters of the hate crimes and related incidents in the region last year were acts of graffiti, according to a report reviewed by Halton's police services board Thursday.

The statistical summary prepared by Halton Regional Police states there were 32 hate-related occurrences in 2009, 24 of which were classified as "graffiti related mischief." There were an average annual 36 such occurrences between 2004 and 2008.

Police classified three of the 2009 occurrences, involving graffiti and a harassing telephone call, as hate crimes where a specific individual or group was targeted for their race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

"We traditionally err on the side of caution. If it looks like a hate crime, then we categorize it that way," Halton's Police Chief Gary Crowell told the board.

The other 29 occurrences were defined as hate-related incidents, which refer to any act "that expresses bias, prejudice, bigotry or contempt towards a vulnerable or disadvantaged community or its members."

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