

Police board greenlights sexual assault learning forum

The Halton Regional Police Services (HRPS) Board approved plans at its meeting last Thursday (April 27) to move ahead with hosting a learning forum on sexual assault.

Titled Sexual Assault: Science, Collaboration and the Provision of Optimal Victim Support, the June 21 forum is aimed at police and victim advocates and is expected to include information on Ontario advocate case reviews, trauma-informed policing and a case-review model that originated and has been successfully used in Philadelphia, according to a board report.

As part of phase I of the Halton Police Services Board's review of sexual assault investigations, the executive director of the board has been engaged in information gathering and research, stated the report.

A number of key themes and trends emerge from current research, government reports and media articles. One of these themes is the need for ongoing education of justice system officials on sexual assault, in particular on the avoidance of gender bias, and on trauma-informed service provision, the report continued.

A second theme is the need for multi-sectoral collaboration in order to provide optimal victim support. A related trend is the movement toward the adoption of and interest in Philadelphia-style models of police-

advocate case reviews across North American police services.

The cost of the forum is currently estimated at \$13,323, which will be taken out of the HRPS Board's trust fund.

Costs could change based on a smaller or larger audience. 75 people are expected to attend.

The conference is currently set to be held at the Harbour Banquet Centre, 2340 Ontario St., from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The following speakers are scheduled to attend to speak on various topics:

- Clinical psychologist Dr. Lori Haskell — Trauma-Informed Policing: Understanding the Neurobiology of Sexual Assault;
- Terry Fromson, of the Philadelphia-based Women's Law Project, and Tom McDevitt, retired lieutenant from the Philadelphia Police Department — The Philadelphia Model;
- Sunny Marriner, executive director of the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre — The Ontario Violence Against Women Advocate Case Review.

Lunch will also be provided to those who attend.

Anyone interested in registering for the forum can do so by emailing Julie Moscato, HRPS Board executive director, at julie.moscato@haltonpolice.ca

Halton police joins team to investigate suspicious fires

Several nearby police services including Halton Region and fire departments are coming together to investigate unsolved suspicious fires in their areas.

Criminal investigators from Wellington County OPP, West Region OPP Support Unit, Halton police and the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal are continuing a multi-jurisdictional investigation to find the person responsible for setting these fires.

A total of 18 fires in the County of Wellington are considered suspicious and are being investigated.

These fires date back to September and include three at unoccupied homes, two inoperable vehicles and one debris pile from a previous fire in Puslinch.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Det. Const. Kevin Detweiler from Wellington County OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

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