

On night patrol with Halton's finest 2017 results of Enhanced Impaired Driving Enforcement

Snow, Snowmobiles and Traffic stops

By: Harry Rudolfs

When I arrived at the Halton Police substation Friday night, snow was blanketing the top of Constable Dan Covato's Ford Taurus Sports Utility cruiser. For the next five hours I rode beside the 6 foot, 28 year old officer, as he tirelessly patrolled the highways and back roads around Acton.

Early in the evening, we had just made a turn on Highway 7. The road was icy and only partially plowed. We were chasing a pack of speeding vehicles scampering westbound towards Trafalgar Road. "The speed limit is 80 here and he's doing 100 in these conditions," Covato said as he flipped on the blue and red strobes and pushed the "yelp" horn button.

"Sometimes you can only get one," he said, as the rear car braked and the rest of the group scurried away. The traffic stop turned up a commuter on his way home from work, driving his wife's car so he didn't have the insurance slip. But everything else checked out and the man was delighted to be let go with a warning instead of a ticket.

The next driver was less happy to be stopped: a scoutmaster with

a troop of kids returning from an outing at Everton. Covato followed the van around the corner from Main Street to Mill Street before pulling him over. The problem was an insecure load of dog sleighs loosely strapped atop the trailer. After cinching the straps tighter, the grumbling scoutmaster also got a handshake instead of a citation.

From there, a call on the computer about snowmobilers on the green space north of Fairy Lake, took us to Elizabeth Street to find one hapless sledder, helmet-less on the edge of the road.

"He said he wasn't the one ripping around," Covato confided. "We're just going to check his driver's licence and make sure he's a licenced driver. He lives just down the street here, so we're going to make sure he drives slowly and gets home safely," said Covato. "What's better, giving him a bunch of tickets or having an honest conversation with him about what's going on?"

Indeed, Covato is as much an ambassador for the Halton Police as anything else. During the evening several people waved from the sidewalk. "It's a real pleasure to work up here. We have a great relationship with the public," he said.

Cavato's mobile work station—think of a heavy-duty lap top—linked up with dispatch and the CPIC system, didn't stop "pinging" for most of the night. But the roads around Acton were surprisingly quiet despite the bad weather. Driving eastward on



Queen Street, Cavato spotted a set of tail lights buried in the ditch in front of the Acton Arena. A couple of young women were huddled inside the car with the engine shut off.

They had been on their way to Guelph when they hit an icy patch and spun into the ditch. Cavato got them to warm up in the back of the squad car, and gave them a lift to McDonald's to await a tow. No charges in this case, either.

"You've got to use your discretion," Covato pondered after dropping them off. "The snow is falling, the road conditions are poor, she's got winter tires on, and I don't smell any alcohol. My concern is more to make sure she is safe and that we can prevent any further loss of control here."

Constable Cavato kept his vehicle moving most of the night, punching up licence plates, checking abandoned cars and cul-de-sacs, dividing his time between residential developments, industrial parks and rural concession roads. This is what he calls "pro-active policing," looking for signs of suspicious activity, with a focus on preventing or intercepting criminal intent.

"I do love my job," added Covato at the end of his shift. "We're rooted in community policing, so it's great when the community reaches out to us."



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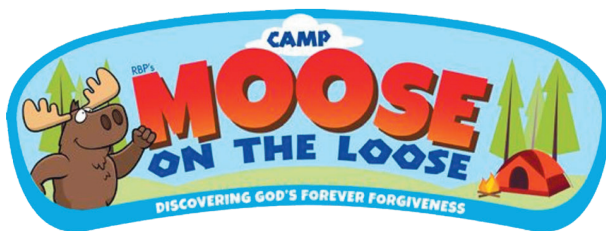
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2017 results of Enhanced Impaired Driving Enforcement

Impaired driving remains one of the three big road safety issues in Halton Region. Statistics show that impaired drivers are much more likely to cause collisions, highway injuries and vehicular deaths than non-impaired drivers. "This is one of the greatest risks to public safety that we face," said Halton Regional Police Service Deputy Chief Nishan Duraiappah. Part of Halton Regional Police Service's commitment to Community Safety and Well-Being is an enhanced emphasis at the front line, and upstream opportunities for the community to engage in prevention and risk mitigation.

Recognizing that traditional approaches to impaired enforcement represented an opportunity for improvement, the Halton Regional Police Service leveraged their existing front-line resources in conjunction with their vast database of impaired-related information and used business intelligence and advanced analytics to refine their deployment model, develop innovative tactics, inform their enforcement activities, and increase the reach of public awareness programs.

As a result of the Service's enhanced toolkit of impaired enforcement tactics:

- a total of 2,563 roadside tests were conducted by HRPS officers in all of 2017, more than double the number of roadside tests conducted in all of 2016;
- 554 motorists were arrested by HRPS officers in all of 2017 for all impaired driving offences, a 26 per cent increase over total impaired offences in all of 2016. Impaired offences include driving while ability impaired, care and control, driving over 80 mgs and fail or refuse to provide a sample;
- a total of 527 roadside suspensions were issued by HRPS officers in all of 2017, a 55 per cent increase over total roadside suspensions in all of 2016;
- 514 roadside tests were conducted by HRPS officers during the December

2017 RIDE program, nearly double the number of roadside tests conducted during the December 2016 RIDE program;

- a total of 73 motorists were arrested by HRPS officers for impaired offences during the December 2017 RIDE program, a 24 per cent increase over total impaired arrests during the December 2016 RIDE program; and
- 83 roadside suspensions were issued by HRPS officers during the December 2017 RIDE program, a 54 per cent increase over the total number of roadside suspensions issued during the December 2016 RIDE program.

The significant increase in impaired arrests and suspensions can be attributed to the Service's efforts to continuously identify and employ new approaches to impaired enforcement, which are supported by an increasingly vigilant community in terms of reporting suspected impaired drivers to police. "In 2017, road users within our region reported 165 drivers who were subsequently located by police and arrested for impaired driving," said Duraiappah. "It is remarkable to think that more than a third of our impaired investigations can be attributed, at least in part, to our community. Community safety is a shared responsibility. We encourage residents and visitors to continue to work with us to reduce impaired driving."

Duraiappah insisted that the efforts of the Service to reduce impaired driving is always going to be a work in progress. "Impaired driving and road safety remain priorities in 2018. Our goal as a Service is to ensure our enforcement is tightly aligned with the issues we are facing. The community deserves and demands our best, and in this regard, we will continue to seek opportunities with our partners to mitigate risk, improve prevention messaging and promote social development with our municipal and health partners. This is core to our Halton Community Safety and Well-Being Plan."