

Time to get tough on swatting

Generally, when we think of high-tech Internet crimes, we think of identity theft or email 'phishing' attempts to separate us from our hard-earned loonies.

But now there's something else in the headlines. Recently, a New Tecumseth teenager was arrested for 'swatting.'

Since February, OPP in the region had received several false alarms requiring response from police and emergency crews.

It was a local example of a disturbing phenomenon.

In May, a Brampton school was locked down after a fake call alleged armed individuals were nearby.

Late last year in Stouffville, police received a call from a man stating he had his two-year-old son at gunpoint. Police arrived to find a family watching TV.

"These types of calls, when they're done by professional hackers, can be very challenging to trace and track down," said York Regional Police spokesperson Const. Andy Pattenden.

"They're using sophisticated technology to mask their identity when they make these calls (and) sound effects are included (to make them) very believable."

The callers use 'spoofed' phone lines over the Internet to make it appear to 911 operators that the call is coming from a particular location — sometimes from inside the targeted house.

In one of the worst cases so far, a 911 call to York police reported that a schizophrenic man had shot and killed his wife and was hunting down his son. Police responded by breaking down the door of the targeted house, only to find a distraught, innocent family of four inside.

A B.C. teen recently pleaded guilty to 29 counts of extortion, public mischief, false police reports and criminal harassment.

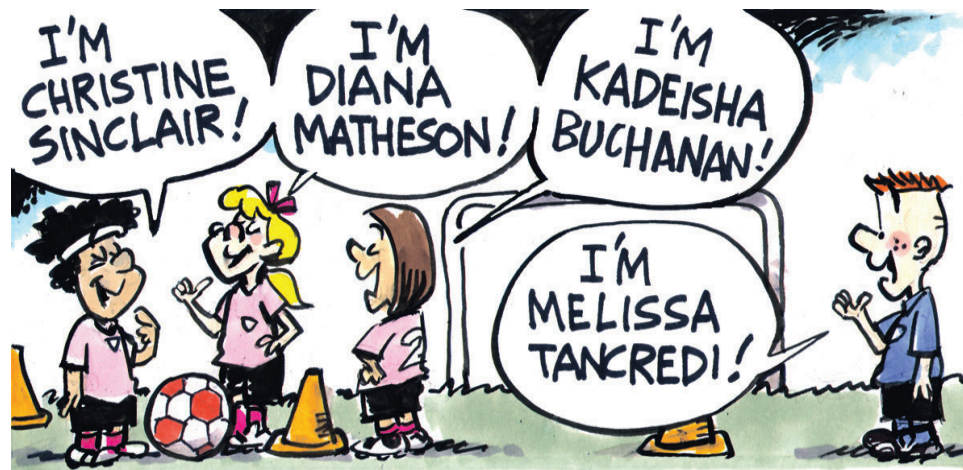
There are legal penalties facing convicted 'swatters,' but they are clearly not serving as much of a deterrent. The fact that many perpetrators are young offenders complicates the issue.

But, as Internet-based crimes change and evolve, so too must the justice system.

Police need to be equipped with the tools — whether it's serious fines or jail time — to deter these activities. These aren't pranks, they are crimes, and it's only a matter of time before there's a tragedy.

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Letters to the editor

Foodshare grateful

Acton Foodshare Board would like to thank everyone involved in donating approximately 10,500 pounds of food and \$800 in donations.

The food drive on April 11 provided a wide selection of food to stock the shelves of the food bank and help community members in need.

A special thank you to the Scouts, Guides, Bethel Church Youth Groups, parents, food bank volunteers and other volunteers who collected, sorted and packed the food for a number of hours.

Thank you to the Bethel congregation for their continued support and also providing the facilities for sorting of the food donations.

The following businesses, Giant Tiger, No Frills and Tim Hortons, provided food which was much appreciated by the volunteers.

Thank you also to the *Acton New Tanager* and *Independent Free Press* for their support and coverage of the event.

The communities of Acton and Lime-

house were again very generous in their support of the annual food drive and it is much appreciated by the Acton Foodshare Board of Directors and its clients.

Arlene Humphreys,
Chair, Acton Foodshare

And time to drop the "nice guy" attitude towards Michael Chong and properly associate him with the Harper government he has voted with all along.

"Just following orders" won't do Mr. Chong.

Rick Hall,
Olde Base Line Road

Thanks for being balanced

Nice to see a change in editorial policy.

The Conservative government has been working to control the message all along and incumbency has huge advantages, not just in the publicly funded partisan mailings and television ads but in the free space local papers give to the sitting MP.

Nice to see you offset that a bit.

There is very little left of what used to be called "the public space". Glad to see you taking some measures before Harper turns Revenue Canada on you, the fourth estate.

Let's start holding these guys' feet to the fire.

Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number.

Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed

150 words and may be edited for content and/or

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