

Police investigating vandalism at Ethel Gardiner

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Halton regional police are looking for suspects in the two alleged graffiti incidents at Ethel Gardiner Public school, where homophobic slurs were spray painted on the front of the building.

Currently, the police are classifying the act as a mischief offence. Without surveillance cameras near the premises, there are no suspects at the moment.

The Halton District School Board has sent home letters to parents about the incident, explaining that staff worked to quickly remove the graffiti.

"We are very disappointed by this incident but remain hopeful that it is an isolated incident," said Debbie de Chastelain

and Clark Lee, principal and vice principal, in the note. "However, the graffiti reminds us there is intolerance and phobia toward LGBTQ+ people in our communities."

On Thursday, June 7 the school will be hosting Rainbow Day, where students are invited to wear rainbow colours in support of LGBTQ+ pride and inclusion, and other Georgetown schools are invited to do the same.

Chris D'Souza, an equity and human rights strategist who teaches at Brock University, says that this is unnerving to know that there are people who would commit these acts in his neighbourhood.

The Georgetown parent is a LGBTQ+ and human rights advocate who works on a national level to see changes in the ways that educators approach rights.

"I'm shocked and very, very dismayed," he said, explaining that it is arguable whether or not legally, this classifies as a hate crime.

"I think there's still a complex reality around the fact that it's graffiti," he said.

In his own perfect world, D'Souza says everyone in Georgetown would fly the Pride flag to show solidarity.

"I ordered my own flag," he said. "It's in the mail."

Crime rates on the rise in Halton Hills, Milton: Halton police

Crime rates and motor vehicle collision rates are on the rise in Halton Hills and Milton, according to the annual report released by the Halton Regional Police Service for 2017.

The report cites an increase in property crime (up 28.4 per cent to 2,362 from 1,839), violent crime (up 8.5 per cent to 777 from 716), other crime (up 2.6 per cent to 663 from 646) and motor vehicle collisions (up 11.8 per cent to 2,860 from 2,559) from 2016 to 2017. The total crime rate has increased by 13.7 per cent as a result.

The "other crime" category includes prostitution, gaming and betting, offensive weapons and other criminal code offences.

This parallels the overall hike in reported crime incidents in Halton Region as a whole, which has increased to 12,092 from 10,657 from 2016 to 2017. When factoring in the regional population growth, the police reported a crime rate increase of 10.8 per cent.

In the region, the highest violent crime spikes are seen in the categories of attempted murder (up

400 per cent to five incidents from one), homicide (up 200 per cent to three incidents from one), sexual assault (up 48.8 per cent to 186 incidents from 125) and abduction/forcible confinement (up 45.5 per cent to 32 incidents from 22).

While this data shows a recent increase in criminal activity in the region, Halton has generally been experiencing a downward trend in its annual crime rate since the early '90s.

For more information or to view the full report, visit <https://www.halton-police.ca/>.

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