

HALTON RESIDENTS CHARGED IN CHILD EXPLOITATION INVESTIGATIONS

Nine Halton residents were among more than a hundred people charged with child exploitation offences in October, the result of the work being done by investigators and analysts that comprise the Provincial Strategy to Protect Children from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation on the Internet.

Of the nine individuals facing charges, five are from Burlington, two from Georgetown and two from Milton.

Child exploitation numbers continue to rise, according to the provincial operation involving 27 police services, including Halton police.

The results of the October investigations, named Project Maverick, showed police partners conducted 277 investigations, completed 168 search warrants and seized 1,032 devices. A

total of 428 charges were laid against 107 people.

During the investigations, 61 victims were identified and referred to community-based resources for assistance, while an additional 60 children were safeguarded. There are 175 ongoing investigations where additional charges may be laid.

"The work done by the provincial strategy members takes us to some of the darkest corners of society and exposes the horrific crimes committed every day against children," said OPP Det.-Sgt. Jamie King, provincial strategy lead.

The provincial strategy includes the ministries of the Attorney General and Solicitor General and the 27 police agencies.

Additional partners participating in these investigations included OPP Digital Forensics, the Roy-

al Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Homeland Security. The BOOST Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, the Children's Aid Society and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection provided victims' support and education.

Since the provincial strategy began in 2006, it has completed 65,564 investigations and laid 24,608 charges against 6,540 people. A total of 3,470 victims have been identified worldwide.

"It remains our utmost priority to protect those most vulnerable, and lead them to safety while holding those responsible for these crimes accountable. I'm extremely proud of the tremendous work done by our officers as part of Project Maverick," said HRPS



Halton police photo

Child exploitation numbers on the rise, according to investigators.

Insp. Chris Newcombe, regional investigative services.

The numbers are shocking, but they provide hope

by showing the lengths police are willing to go to protect children, said OPP Chief Superintendent Kari Dart, OPP investigation

and support bureau.

"This is not a crime that can be combatted by our members alone and we ask that everyone out there recognize the importance they play in protecting children. Report these crimes, remain vigilant and educate yourself," added King.

The video outlining the investigation is available on Twitter (@OPP_News) and Facebook (@ontario-provincialpolice).

The investigations continue and anyone with information on these or any child exploitation investigations are asked to contact police. Report any instances of online child abuse to police or cybertip.ca. If a child is being harmed, call 911.

To learn how to keep children safe, go to Canadian Centre for Child Protection or cybertip.ca.



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