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Rural Community Forum

Halton Police plan to better publicize community policing programs

BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

For Halton Region Police there's a visibility problem out there when it comes to community policing in rural areas – and it's something that police hope to deal with in the near future.

Last month, Halton police hired a public relations specialist, Bonnie Shulman, who will work closely with the police service to market rural Community Consultation Committees – otherwise known as CCC's – as well as rural watch programs. This won't be her only role, but Sergeant Kevin Maher, who works in community policing support for Halton Police, says it will be one issue she will be addressing.

Sergeant Maher, who attended a Rural Community Forum held recently at the Halton Region Museum, underlined the importance of letting people know about the existence of CCC's and rural watch programs. At the forum, some residents – including Steve Sniderman of Nassagaweya – admitted they had never heard of a CCC or knew of a rural watch program in their area. And another rural resident wanted to know how he could get in touch with his local CCC. Sergeant Maher says he's not surprised by the lack of knowledge. "I would say we could make strides to improve marketing."

At the meeting, which was hosted by Halton Region as well as the Regional Police, Halton Chair Joyce Savoline stressed the importance of CCC's, volunteer groups comprised of people from the community that are intended to address concerns in rural areas. CCC's meet regularly and address not only policing concerns, but quality of life issues that cover a specific area. Rural watch programs are usually made up of people residing on a particular road, and they generally deal with policing issues only. There are currently four CCC's in rural areas including Nassagaweya, rural Halton Hills, rural Burlington, and rural Acton.

But a lack of awareness was not the only concern raised at the forum, where some members of local CCC's mentioned the need for more involvement by local residents.

While Savoline noted that police are partly in "the business of getting the bad guys," she emphasized that this role is only "the tail end" of what they actually do – much of their work, she pointed out, involves information gathering. "The obligation is on us to get information to police because their business is getting information together."

Milton Councillor Cindy Lunau also believes that more community involvement would result in better community policing. "We want to be able to count on neighbours. If there is a pattern of vandalism, then chances are someone in the area knows why. This isn't a case of police solving everything."

Input from others is something that Barb Johnson, who chairs the CCC in rural Halton Hills, sees as vital to the effectiveness of any community policing program. As she pointed out in an interview after the meeting, effective community policing starts with people and there's a two-way communication needed between residents and police. Her CCC, which is known as the Halton Hills Rural Community Policing Committee, currently has 10 members and she says the group is managing well. But she pointed out that new members would be welcome.

Information on CCC's and other community policing programs is available on the Halton Police website, www.hrps.on.ca. To contact Sergeant Maher, call 905-825-4747, ext. 4901.

Two perspectives on the Throne Speech

Mike Chong

MP, Wellington-Halton Hills (Con)

The recent Throne Speech was a disappointment for municipalities.

Two years ago, the government promised to start transferring the gas tax to municipalities, starting in April 2005 up to the full 5 cents by 2010. This commitment was cause for optimism for cash-strapped municipalities.

However the government has failed to deliver. A Throne Speech is the broad strokes of the government's plan, but this Throne Speech was so vague as to be almost meaningless. It is possible the government will announce the details before next year. But municipalities need specific details now, so they can start budgeting for 2005.

Furthermore the government has moved from a specific to a vague commitment. During the election, 5 cents per litre of the gas tax was promised; this Throne Speech promises a "portion" of the gas tax. I hope this doesn't mean that they are backing away from their promise.

Finally, I worry that smaller communities, like Halton Hills, with their scattered population and huge infrastructure will get less of the money on a per capita basis in favour of more densely populated areas. This would fly in the face of Godfrey's commitment to base the transfer on "representation by population".

Municipalities desperately need this money. I've been told that there is a backlog of about \$57 million in roadwork for Halton Hills, a big number for a small community.

What does this inaction mean for you? It means more closed bridges, deteriorating roads, and ultimately higher property taxes, because the money has to come from somewhere to address these infrastructure problems.

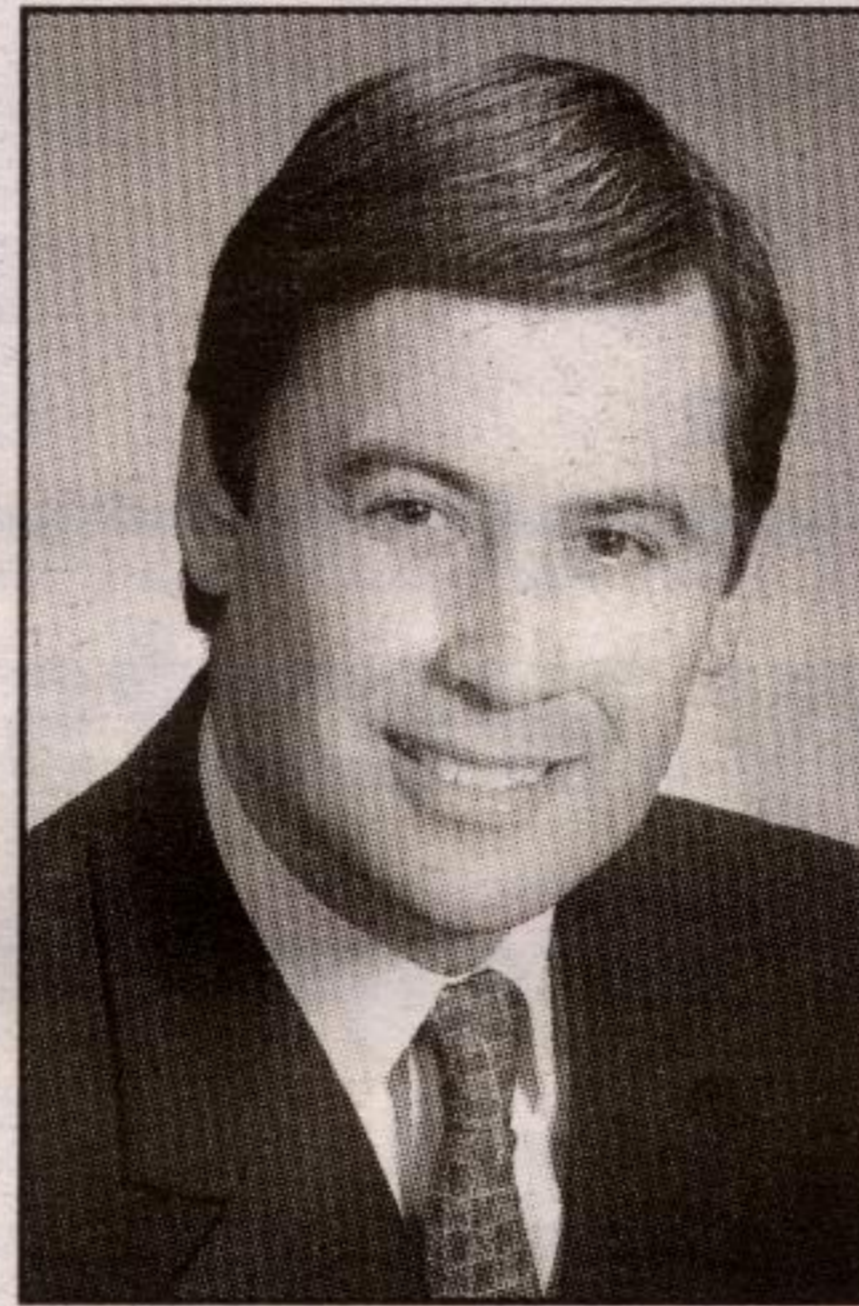
The gas tax promise was made before the election, during the election, and after the election. It is been mentioned in two Throne Speeches. We have a \$9.1 billion surplus. The time for talk is over. It is time for action.

Gary Carr

MP, Halton (Lib)

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to my constituents of Halton the first Throne Speech of the 38th Parliament, and to explain some of its key factors.

On October 5th, 2004, Her Excellency the Governor General opened the 38th Session of Parliament with a Speech from the Throne that highlights the Liberal government's agenda of building a prosperous and sustain-



able 21st century for Canada. This is a Throne Speech for the 21st century that focused on Prime Minister Paul Martin's key priorities: an even more vibrant economy, strengthened social foundations, and securing for Canada a place of pride and influence in the world.

The Throne Speech does what we promised to do in the election campaign, we have made a firm commitment to work with all parliamentarians – regardless of political affiliation – to contribute to real progress for Canadians. Our government will do its part to ensure that this minority parliament works, so that we can unite the voices of all Canadians in common purpose. As the Governor General explained in her speech, together we can move Canada forward.

The Speech from the Throne reiterated – and, in some cases, expanded on – our government's commitments to:

A responsible economic strategy that will make Canada more competitive and sustainable without spending ourselves into deficit;

Implementing the 10-year health plan to strengthen health care, agreed to by the provinces and territories last month;

A national system of early learning and child care, improving tax-based support for caregivers and disabled Canadians, and programs to keep seniors active and engaged in community life;

Working with First Nations and provincial and territorial governments to create conditions for long-term development of Aboriginal Canadians while still respecting historical rights and agreements;

Forging a New Deal with cities and communities to address key issues such as urban renewal, immigrant integration, cooperative service delivery and affordable housing;

Working with its public- and private-sector partners and the international community to build sustainable development systematically into its decision-making on the environment, including the implementation of an equitable national plan to respect our Kyoto Accord commitments; and

Releasing a comprehensive International Policy Statement that reflects our government's intention to integrate our defence, diplomacy, development and trade efforts in order to assert our interests and project our values in a changing 21st century world.

Our Government will also introduce initiatives in many other areas – including commitments from the last Speech from the Throne – and will build on the work of parliamentary committees, involve parliamentarians in the review of key appointments and examine the need and options for reform of our democratic institutions, including electoral reform.

I am particularly pleased that the government will introduce legislation to implement its Learning Bond, which is an innovative savings vehicle that will help low-income families provide for their children's post secondary education. As well, the health care plan will accelerate reform and ensure better access to key tests and treatments.

Supported by a committed and excellent public service, the government will work diligently in this minority parliament to address the priority areas it has identified.

I believe that this Throne Speech will strengthen our countries social foundations and secure for Canada a place of pride and influence in the world. It is great news for Canada, and for Halton.

If you would like any further information on the Throne Speech, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

