

Increase police presence in Acton after rampage at Georgetown fair

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

Two eyewitness accounts of the terrifying rampage at the Georgetown Fall Fair on Saturday night "shocked and dismayed" Halton Police Chief Ean Algar, who, with Deputy-chief Gary Crowell, heard their accounts at the Halton Hills Council meeting on Monday night.

The sound of a crowd chanting "kill the cops - kill the police" from the park was the first sign of trouble for fairground neighbour, Charles Street homeowner Thomas Trotter.

He said the night was "nauseating," and a terrible "riot."

"Never in my life have I been so scared," Trotter said, describing how the crowd ripped up 25 feet of his new wooden fence to use as "javelins," as weapons, against police and their cars.

"What really hurts is that it happened in my town," Trotter said, asking for a proactive plan of increased security to ensure it never happens again, while also praising the joint police and firefighter response to the incident.

Charles Street resident Burke Metcalfe questioned whether police were prepared to deal with the large crowd after moving it from the fairgrounds,

He described racing cars, fights and intoxicated teens within 35 feet of his home, but no police cars in the area.

"I was scared. I was seriously scared about what could happen - not what did happen - and thank God they dispersed, and thank God everything worked out as well as it did," Metcalfe said, asking why there wasn't a stronger police presence at the park, adding he was "afraid" and not naïve enough to think it won't happen again.

Several councillors, including Acton's Clark Somerville, complained they weren't given enough information about the incident soon enough from the mayor's office.

Chief Algar said the mayor was notified by phone Sunday morning, and a press release was issued later that day. That release was provided for councillors at the meeting, and they also received an e-mail from acting CAO Bob Austin, with limited information on Sunday morning.

Park neighbour, Councillor Maya Johnson, also complained about the lack of information from the mayor's office, and suggested years of ignored illegal drinking in the park led up to the incident.

Noting that a police helicopter was used to disperse a large crowd several years ago at the Acton Fall Fair, and that there have been several incidents with large crowds in Acton, Ward One and Halton Councillor Rick Bonnette asked how police will handle the upcoming Acton fair.

"We are now taking steps to visit with the or-

ganizers and Town officials, and we will be taking additional measures," Chief Algar said, adding he had a message for youths.

"We will be there, and we will be there in presence," he said, adding those "...planning to be mischievous and to misbehave, that we're not going to tolerate that (behaviour)."

Georgetown and Halton Councillor John Day said the incident is a "wake-up call for us," on youth issues, and is a community, not just security issue.

Georgetown Councillor Jane Fogal said it should be a wake-up call for parents and that teen alcohol abuse is a growing problem at outdoor, evening events designed to attract youth.

"If there's 500 kids out there, there's a thousand parents (that) should be asked where is your kid if they were out until 1:30 in the morning," Fogal said, adding the Town owns the fairground and issues permits for events and will have to "really tighten it up."

Mayor Gastle asked the Chief to thank his staff who were "put in very dangerous situations by unruly youth of the Town of Halton Hills."

"I am confident you will correct it and this kind of incident won't happen again," she said.

Outside the council chambers, Chief Algar

said there appeared to be a core group of approximately 100 instigators who led the attacks that included spitting on police and throwing beer bottles and rocks at officers and vehicles.

He said the incident began with the re-arrest of a "young lad" who had been previously taken out of the park - he did not know what for - who then returned.

"The police were called to where that individual was and they arrested him, and is just seemed to gain some momentum with the youth trying to un-arrest the individual," Chief Algar said.

Algar said at future fairs there would be increased police presence and preventative measures, that could include checking backpacks.

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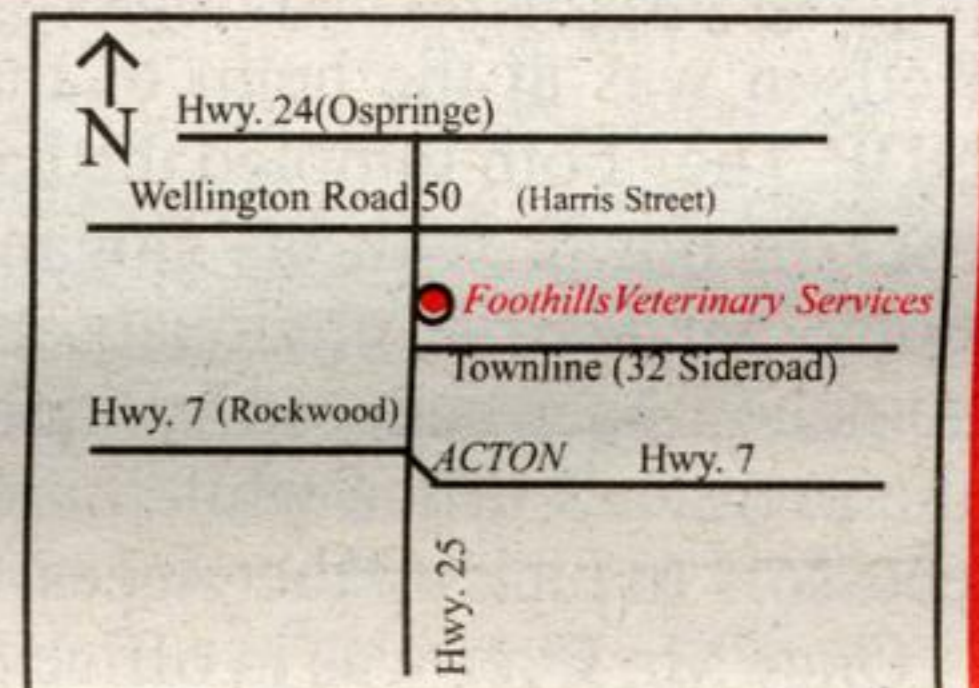
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Old post office bell is up for auction Saturday

Acton resident Ron Holloway alerted The New Tanner to the fact that part of Acton's heritage goes to auction this coming Saturday, Sept. 13.

The old post office bell, which rang out the hours from the red brick post office tower on the south east corner of Mill and Willow Sts. from 1912 until the building was razed, is being auctioned by Hills Rowland of RR2, Brampton, who acquired it after the old post office was demolished.

The auction is at the Rowland Farm on Highway 10, about two miles north of Snelgrove, Ron Holloway notes. He was interested in acquiring the bell but believes it will be beyond the scope of his pocketbook. He hopes some organization or individual may be interested in getting it.

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