

Borrowed helicopter here on trial basis

# Halton Police sing praises of 'valuable' crime-fighting tool

**H**alton Regional Police Service has been putting its latest crime-fighting tool, a \$1.2 million helicopter, to good use since they got it in July.

The Bell JetRanger helicopter, which Halton Police are sharing with Hamilton-Wentworth and Peel Regions for a 20-week trial period that began mid-July, helped to earn its keep last week when it was used in a drug eradication project. Police seized more than \$1.5 million worth of marijuana that was spotted from the air growing in secluded areas of Halton. Most of the marijuana crops were found in Halton Hills.

Halton Police have had the helicopter, from Canadian Helicopters Ltd., about 14 days so far. They have it on random days twice a week, and Const. Grant Schott, an observer on the police helicopter, said every chance they get, the chopper is in the air. It is affected, however, by lightning and poor visibility.

"It is a very valuable and useful tool," said Schott.

Both Schott and Const. Jeff Corey, co-ordinator of Halton's helicopter project, say the helicopter has been well received by the officers on the ground and they are all learning as they go how it can be used most effectively.

"It's a safety factor for officers," said Corey. He said the officers on board the chopper "are eyes for officers working on the roads" and the helicopter,



Halton Police have been sharing the use of this Bell JetRanger helicopter, from Canadian Helicopters Ltd., with other area police services. The helicopter was put to good use last week in Halton Hills as officers located several marijuana groves. Photo by Ted Brown

which has a cruising speed of 138 mph, is often first on the scene.

The helicopter is equipped with a video tape

recorder, Night Sun, a 30 million candle power remote control spotlight that can illuminate from 1500 feet, and a forward looking infrared camera that will seek out and pinpoint a heat source on the ground, such as a human, animal, or even a recently ditched vehicle that still has a warm engine or brakes.

The helicopter, which is piloted by Mike Roach, a 25-year veteran flier of air ambulances, has been used successfully in several situations and helped to lead to arrests after impaired drivers fled accident scenes in Burlington and Oakville.

In the Oakville incident the service's canine unit was brought in and the helicopter, utilizing the spotlight and infrared camera, and dog worked together to find the suspect.

The chopper has also been used in several searches throughout Halton including the search for a missing Alzheimer's victim in Georgetown in July.

Earlier this year the helicopter proved a valuable resource when it was used to fly over a huge bush party in the Fifth Line and 20 Sideroad area of Halton Hills.

The owner of the property wanted the party shut down because it was getting out of hand but because it was so far in the bush police had no idea how many people were there. When the helicopter flew over the crowd and lit up the area about half of the party-goers left.

Ground officers were notified how many people were there so they could estimate the manpower required and the party was monitored from the air while ground officers went in.

Corey said the helicopter is ideal for crimes in progress and police pursuits. It's been used in several pursuits and helped lead to an arrest in Burlington for a break and enter in progress.

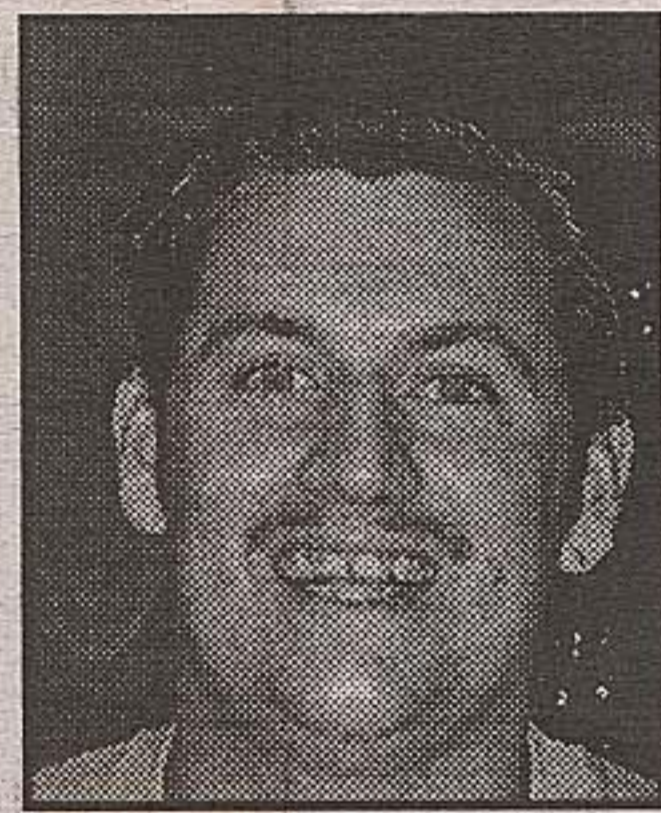
The 20-week helicopter project is being financed with \$250,000 of provincial money and \$100,000 from each of the three regions' police budgets.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

## What You Said

*'The Georgetown and Acton Fall Fairs are coming up.*

*Do you plan on attending?'*



**Shawn Wood,**  
Georgetown,  
front end service  
clerk

"We usually go but we don't think we'll go this year. They need more attractions for the whole family. They have to make sure the rides are safe so that there isn't a tragedy similar to the one that happened at the CNE."



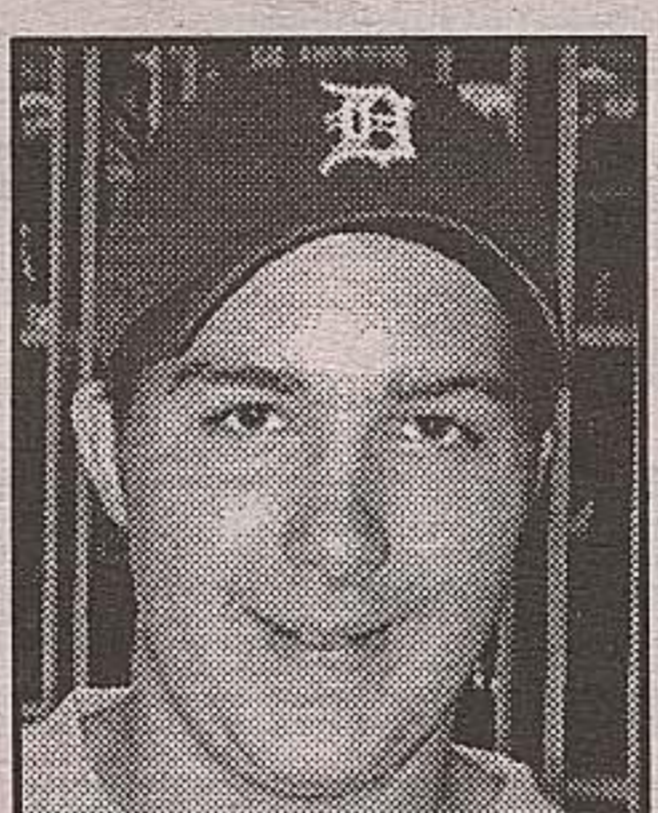
**Steven Wasylyk,**  
Georgetown,  
student

"No, probably not because we are going to be busy that weekend. When we have gone before I liked the rides and looking at animals."



**Stefanie Ligterink,**  
Georgetown,  
student

"I'm going to the Georgetown Fair. I like going on all the rides and playing the games."



**Dusty Smith,**  
Georgetown,  
student

"Yes, me and my friends are planning to go to the demolition derby. I like to see the cars smash into each other."



**Janis Holley,**  
Acton,  
water consultant

"I'm going to Acton's fair. I go in the parade with the Culligan salt truck and give out candies to the kids. It's great fun. I like all the community food booths, the poultry barn, horses and cattle and you meet old friends and relatives at the fair. It's too bad Georgetown's fair isn't as good."

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