

Police budget hike to cost local homeowners \$17 more a year

In the wake of Sept. 11, no one should mind paying \$17 more a year for policing. With that in mind, the Halton Regional Police Services Board passed an 8.2 per cent spending increase in the service's 2002 budget last week.

The budget, which would see the \$17 increase added to the tax bill of a home assessed at \$200,000 will now head to Halton Regional Council for approval early next year.

Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar said he needs another \$4 million over last year's \$52 million budget. The extra money covers the hiring of 18 new police officers. Police officials were unable to tell *The Independent & Free Press* how many would be stationed in Halton Hills.

In his 34 years in policing, Algar said he's never seen a year with as many pressures coming to bear at once. Algar said nearly 86 per cent of the budget is related to ongoing staff costs while the remainder takes in fuel and vehicle costs, inflation, facilities, technology, and more.

The hike is an 8.2 per cent budget boost, but when Halton's growth—and therefore a larger tax assessment base—pays the tab, it will translate into a 5.7 per cent increase on the tax bill.

Board members hassled police brass about a few items—like using an inflation projection of 3-4 per cent (Halton Region is using the same math); the cost of attending conferences by some members; and the hiring of three people attached to recruitment—but by-and-large the budget received little opposition.

Police are facing tough times these days as Halton grows along with policing pressures.

Halton is growing by 12,000 to 13,000 people annual-



EAN ALGAR

ly, crime is on the rise, police recruitment is taking a beating as there's major attrition by senior staff retiring and major issues have cropped up like gangs and drugs, not to mention Sept. 11.

Since the terrorist attacks in the U.S., Halton police have also had to deal with upwards of 100 calls about suspicious packages and have developed a special protocol for dealing with such calls.

Algar said calls to police are up by 4.5 per cent and there's a slight increase in crime over previous years (3 per cent over the increase in population)—though violent crime rates have dropped since Sept. 11.

The crime rate in Halton, which had dipped over recent years, is expected to continue to rise based on

trend predictions that put the blame for 50 per cent of the crime onto the shoulders of those aged 15 to 24.

One area to see how far police are being stretched is in the RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) program. Last year 36,754 drivers were stopped. Although Algar promises police will have a high RIDE profile during this festive season he said only half the number of cars stopped last year will be checked this year.

RIDE, like many other programs, are paid duties which officers do outside their regular work. However, with more than \$100,000 gone into overtime pay last year, Deputy Chief Gary Crowell said many officers are suffering "burn-out" and aren't applying for paid duty.

—By Angela Blackburn, special

Georgetown home to one motorcycle club

More cash needed to battle gangs: chief

Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar used the example of increased gang activity in the region to justify asking the Police Services Board for more money.

While the gangs may not be headquartered in Halton, that doesn't stop them from doing business here, the chief told the board.

"They don't just hit the border and say it's Halton. They come here...they're all here," said Algar. But the chief noted that policing gang activity is just one of a myriad of pressures facing Halton police.

Deputy Chief Gary Crowell echoed Algar's sentiments and said there are at least two Hell's Angels members in the area and Georgetown is home to one motorcycle club.

Although no clubhouses have yet to spring up in the region, Algar said a gang called the Crypts and another one called Oriental Blood Brothers (OBB), has members who frequent Halton nightclubs.

Several members of the OBB gang were charged earlier this year in connection with the murder of a Burlington teenager.

Crowell added aside from "traditional organized



GARY CROWELL

crime groups and gangs, there are also outlaw motorcycle gangs, eastern Europe and Asian groups."

A Russian gang, for example, has been involved in telemarketing schemes in the region, said the chief.

Algar said the policing of organized crime is time intensive and complex for police. It takes a lot of human resources and is often international in scope—and it's costly.

This past year, Halton had 14 specially trained investigators working on organized crime.

Meanwhile, the chief said their "opponents" are well-organized, have vast resources, follow no rules and often co-operate with each other.

And while the chief didn't necessarily link gangs or organized crime activity to a growing drug trade, he said a "proliferation" of drug cultivation operations is also putting pressure on local police.

So far in 2001, 16 such operations have been raided in Halton—three in Georgetown in the past few months. In total, well over 4,000 marijuana plants with a street value of \$5.5 million have been seized.

—By Angela Blackburn, special

Police blotter

Guitars worth \$1,500 stolen

Halton Police are investigating the theft of two guitars and cases, valued at \$1,500, from the basement of a Lucinda Place home during a break and enter Thursday.

The back door had been left unlocked and some Christmas presents had also been unwrapped.



Lorne Scots honour three

Second Lieutenant Diane Costa (left) and Lieutenant Scott Teeter (right) received their commission scroll from 676 Lorne Scots Army Cadets Commanding Officer Captain Trevor Brent Wednesday. The scroll, signed by the Governor General, commissions them as officers in the Canadian Armed Forces. (Right) Anneliese Krueger is the first female Chief Warrant Officer in the history of the 676 Lorne Scots Army Cadets. Krueger was promoted to the rank by Brent. Her parade position is Regimental Sergeant Major. The Lorne Scots welcomes new members, aged 12 to 18. Call Lieutenant Scott Teeter at 905-873-6711.

Photos by Lisa Tallyn



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