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## Clean machines

Maggie Darling, (left) a Grade 7 student at Stewarttown Public School, joins pal Abbie Jolly in washing cars Saturday afternoon in the school's parking lot. Team members held a car wash as a way of raising money for the Grade 7 and 8 volleyball teams' new uniforms and equipment. Photo by Sabrina Byrnes

## Halton crime rate at lowest level in 30 years, says chief

**H**alton's crime rate last year was at its lowest level in 30 years, and Police Chief Ean Algar called that a "good news" story when he updated Halton Hills council about the state of policing last week.

In Halton Hills the crime rate was down 13.3 per cent— 228 less crimes were committed (1,848) compared to the 2,076 committed the year before.

"We think that's exceptional," said Algar.

There was also a sizeable decrease in collisions with a region-wide drop of 3.1 per cent (259), and in Halton Hills a decrease of 5.7 per cent (48). Fatal collisions were down regionally 45 per cent (a difference of nine). Fatal collision stats remained the same in Halton Hills (2).

"In almost every category we're down," said the chief. "We're quite pleased with those numbers, although we'd prefer to see no crime and no collisions."

In 2005 the good news continues with an 11.6 per cent drop in crime rate in the first six months of the year — although violent crimes are up 7.8 per cent (152 in 2005 compared to 141 in January to June in 2004). Collisions are also down 4.6 per cent.

While the population has increased, the number of calls region-wide is down in 2005 — in Halton Hills it has been projected the number of calls for service throughout the year will be 400 less than last year.

That was the good news; now the bad news.

Grow-ops (marijuana grow operations) are proving to be time-consuming for police operations.

"I'd like to say we're struggling to stay current," said Algar, "but we're not, in fact, we're losing ground."

• From 2002 to June 2005 there were 500 grow files with 138 still outstanding. (In Halton Hills there are 45 reported incidents with 26 still outstanding—awaiting follow-ups and executing of warrants).

• 86 control drug and substance search warrants were issued (seven in Halton Hills)

• 17,533 plants were seized (1,631 in Halton Hills)

• 133 persons have been charged (13 in Halton Hills)

• \$17.5 million worth of marijuana has been taken off the market.

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