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## Cocaine use on the rise among Halton teenagers

Cocaine and crack cocaine use among local youth is on the rise. That's one of the findings of a recently-conducted provincial survey on student drug use, and a fact that was validated by professionals who work with youths in Halton.

A report presented to the health and social services committee last week from Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Bob Nosal notes that in western Ontario—which includes Halton—cocaine use amongst students has gone from 3.6 per cent in 1999 to 6.2 per cent in 2005, which is the highest prevalence compared to other areas surveyed in the province.

Nosal also reported that an informal scan conducted by public health nurses last month through consulting professionals like school staff, police and youth workers validated that cocaine and crack use has increased among Halton youth.

Public health nurse Lorraine Gold filled the committee in on other details of the provincial survey.

"Since 1993, cocaine use has been steadily increasing for both males and females," she said.

She noted that the most striking jump is seen in Grade 11 students, going from a 2.5 per cent usage rate in 1993 to 7.2 per cent last year.

Gold also said that about 1,600 Halton students used cocaine at least once last year.

Other statistics presented on local drug use include:

- 62 per cent, or about 22,000 Halton students, reported using alcohol during the 12-month period before the survey

- 22.5 per cent, or approximately 8,000 local pupils, said they'd been drunk at least once during the four weeks prior to the survey

- While tobacco use is down, one in seven students said they still smoke, which represents about 5,100 students in the region

- About 9,400 area students, or 26.5 per cent, reported using cannabis

In addition, the health nurses' informal scan revealed local professionals who work with youth feel cannabis use is widespread, tobacco use has declined and most teens seeking treatment services for their substance use are using cannabis, alcohol or crack/cocaine.

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## A tasty start

At last night's Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, St. John's Anglican Church members were joined by their new rector, Rev. Dan Tatarnic, as he and Rector's Warden Barb Mansfield tested the pancakes and syrup before serving. Tatarnic's first day on the job is today coming to St John's and St. Stephen's in Hornby after serving four years at St. Christopher's Anglican Church in Burlington. Photo by Ted Brown

## Hitchhiker facing several charges

## Police seek driver who gave suspect a lift

Halton Police would like to speak to the person who gave a hitchhiker a ride in Halton Hills Sunday.

The motorist has been identified by police as a potential witness.

The hitchhiker, who was charged with several offences, was picked up by an unknown motorist on 15 Sideroad near Fifth Line at approximately 5:15 p.m. then dropped off at Trafalgar Rd. at Maple Ave. where he was later

apprehended by police.

A 41-year-old Halton Hills man was charged with several offences including assault with a weapon, forcible confinement, impaired driving, having over 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood, take a motor vehicle without owner's consent, utter death threats, possession of stolen property, break and enter and theft, and mischief.

A number of the offences are domestic related and the name of the man is being withheld by

police to protect the identity of the victim.

Police report, prior to being arrested, the suspect fled Georgetown in the victim's car and was involved in a single-vehicle accident on 15 Sideroad near Fifth Line. The suspect was picked up while hitchhiking.

The motorist, or anyone with information is asked to contact Const. Cyrus Irani at 905-878-5511 ext. 2105 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

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