



SUN & SAND: Rockwood Conservation Area was the place to be on holiday Monday afternoon as clear blue skies and soaring temperatures set the tone. Despite the alcohol ban, the popular park's camping sites were booked solid over the first long weekend. — Denise Paulsen photo

No gang HQs in Guelph/Eramosa

By Denise Paulsen

Guelph/Eramosa Township has adopted a by-law which sends a clear message to gang members that clubhouses are strictly prohibited within its boundaries. A Municipal Act has been in place since 2001 restricting fortification of buildings. Inspector Scott Smith, Detachment Commander of Wellington County OPP outlined the terms of the legislation at a recent meeting of council

"There are no clubhouses etc in Wellington that I am aware of. This bylaw is intended to be strictly proactive in that respect."

When asked why the Township had taken nine years to enact the by-law Inspector Smith said, "Sometimes things just take a while — especially when working on it with seven municipalities (in Wellington County). All the municipalities have just brought it to their council this spring. It is not unique to Guelph/

Eramosa — in fact Mayor White has been a strong proponent of this effort."

The act is comprehensive, specifically outlawing gang clubhouses in the Guelph/Eramosa Township. Other municipalities, such as the City of Vaughan, have similar laws. According to Smith, groups of individuals involved in nefarious activities want to set up in areas that have not endorsed this protective act. This is a way for the Township to say "no" to the "criminal element" Smith said.

Commonly, the fortifications include erection of steel plates, use of electrified fencing, hidden or 'booby' type traps, steel bars on windows, bullet or resistant-proof shutters, concrete blocks to obstruct doorways, the laminating of glass, construction of concrete pillars, use of cones, barriers or the erection of an observation tower.

Any or all of these fortifications can slow down emergency personnel such as fire and police departments. According to Smith, emergency services have the right to protect the public — rights that the fortification of property may infringe upon.

Smith reported this by-law is not intended to have a detrimental effect on the rights of regular businesses in the municipality to protect their properties.

The ROCKWOOD Miller

Property damage and violence top Guelph/Eramosa crimes

By Denise Paulsen

"Lock it or lose it," Inspector Scott Smith, OPP Wellington County Detachment Officer declared at a recent meeting of council in his Report on Crime presentation to the Guelph/Eramosa Township. "In spite of its crime — Guelph/Eramosa is a very safe place to live in Southern Ontario," said Smith.

"There really are only two types of crime in Guelph/Eramosa — property and violence," Scott said. "Theft of property is that under \$5,000. Most of this is either from unlocked motor vehicles or property left unsecured in open view." Vandalism also falls under this category.

Property crimes such as break and enters are more likely to occur in the south end of the Township and the criminals usually live outside the municipality. The lawless often arrive in stolen vehicles — driven from areas outside the municipality — to commit

crimes within Guelph/Eramosa. They are likely to be transient, making it difficult for the authorities track them.

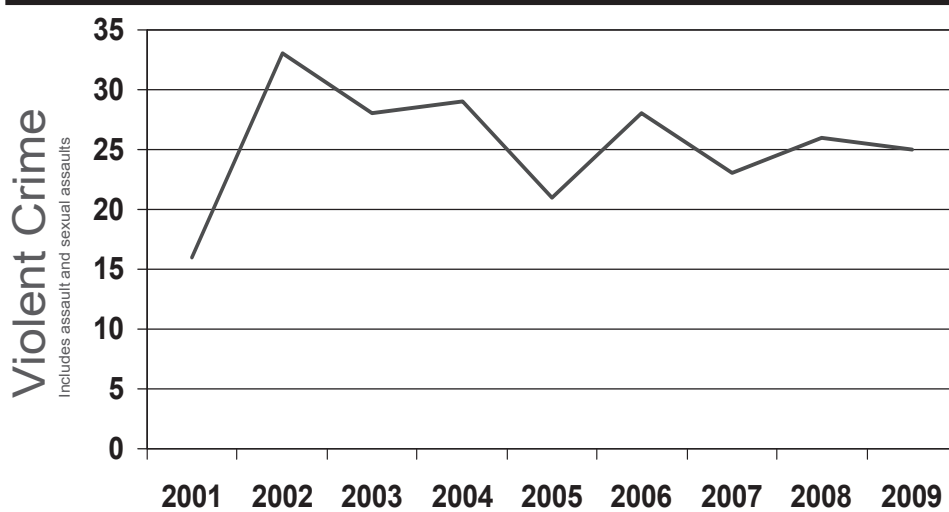
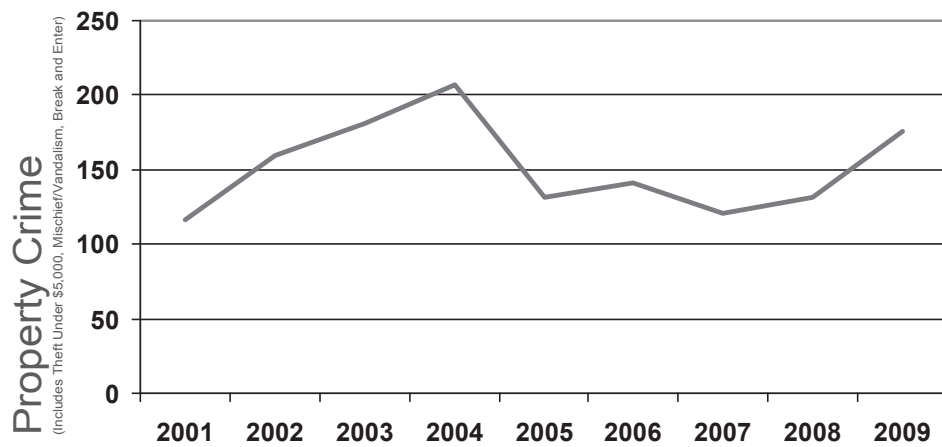
In contrast, criminals living within the northeast part of the Township are committing crimes within their own neighbourhoods. According to Inspector Smith property theft, in a lot of cases, goes unreported. The residents "feel stupid," Smith said. "We like it when the theft is reported — then we have an owner if the stolen goods turn up. If not, it ends up at auction when we recover it."

The public is being asked to make it more difficult for the criminal to commit the crime. "Sheds, homes, unlocked vehicles — if it's valuable to you — lock it! Criminals are lazy. If there is a higher risk, they're less likely to become engaged in the activity," Smith said. Mayor Chris White concurred. "It's your neighbourhood. There are ways to work with each other. You've got to get involved," White said.

Individual homeowners are encouraged to rely on family, friends and neighbours to check on their property when they leave their home unoccupied for extended periods of time. Smith suggested that members of the community install additional lighting at their privately-owned properties. "Alarms remain a significant deterrent to the criminal element," Smith said.

"Violent crime includes assaults and sexual assaults. Violent crime is not a huge issue in Guelph/Eramosa, except for domestic assault where in 2009 a full 25 per cent of the assaults were domestic related," said Inspector Smith.

According to Smith, arresting an offender is "like popping the head off a dandelion — it doesn't get to the root of the problem." Mental Health and Drug Prevention groups are key links in the crime prevention strategy, as they work to decrease deviant patterns of behaviour that can result in criminal activities.



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