

# Anti-smoking initiatives are working

More cigarette sellers in Halton Hills are complying with provincial laws against selling tobacco products to minors, and smoking ban compliance rates are also improving.

A report last week to Halton's Health and Social Services committee found that Halton Hills had a five per cent non-compliance rate for selling to minors in 2008, but the 2009 rate was three per cent. Staff said the decline was due to increased awareness of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, increased inspections, increased fines and increased compliance/enforcement checks of all tobacco vendors.

In 2008, the selling to minors non-compliance rate in Ontario was 10 per cent and the rate in Halton Region remained at three per cent in 2008 and 2009. Last year, Halton staff conducted 160 compliance checks – sending in youth test shoppers to see if a merchant would sell them tobacco without asking for identification to check their age. One \$365 ticket was issued and four warnings were issued after tobacco products were sold to under-age youths.

Compliance checks are done on stores that have no recent history of selling tobacco to minors. If a sale is

made to a youth test shopper, the store operator is warned that the sale occurred and told an enforcement check will be made. If a sale occurs during an enforcement check, a charge is laid. If a tobacco vendor is convicted two or more times within a five year period, an automatic ban on selling tobacco for six to 12 months is applied. Only one premise in Halton was prohibited from selling tobacco in Halton in 2009.

Halton staff conducted compliance/enforcement checks and in 944 cases there was no sale to minors. In 34 cases, the merchants did sell tobacco to a minor, and 29 warnings were issued and five charges laid.

Staff also reported that over-all compliance with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that bans smoking in indoor workplaces, public places, restaurants and bars is very high in Halton, and smoking in workplaces and public places has all but disappeared.

Halton staff conducted 1,055 routine inspections of workplaces, bars, health care facilities and schools and responded to 69 complaints. Thirteen warnings were issued and 61 tickets were issued.

Staff also reported that compliance with Halton's out-

door smoking restrictions on all publicly owned lands – in place for just three months – is also “very high. The Halton bylaw prohibits smoking within nine metres of any entrance or exit of buildings owned or leased by the Region or local municipalities. Halton Council asked municipal councils and Conservation Authorities to consider and respond to the idea of banning smoking on all publicly owned property, including parks and conservation lands. Conservation Halton said no, and Credit Valley Conservation is still waiting for its Board response. Local municipalities said staff reports would be submitted to their respective councils in the near future.

All convictions under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act are posted on Halton's website for a six-month period following the date of conviction. There currently are eight convictions listed – all in Oakville or Burlington, half are for selling tobacco to a minor and half are for establishment owners who did not ensure that there were no ashtrays or smoking related materials in the premise. As well, one adult male was convicted of holding a lit cigarette at the Burlington location.

# Cops want help finding grow-ops

Summer has arrived and with it comes another season for outdoor marijuana grow operations. These operations may continue into September and the Halton Regional Police Service asks the public for their assistance in addressing this illegal activity, and would like to increase public awareness.

Over the past several weeks the Service has responded to several calls related to out door grow operations.

Persons involved in growing marijuana will select rural areas that may include swamps, corn fields, wooded areas and rural rental properties with large acreage. Such

grow areas exist in all four municipalities within Halton Region; Most owners of these properties may not be aware of the illegal activity on their property.

To start and maintain such an operation the growers may bring large bags of fertilizer, shovels, chemicals, pails, generators, pumps and of course the marijuana plants to these locations. The plants are put in the ground and maintained by the grower over the summer months as they mature. Due to the heartiness of the marijuana plant, there may be infrequent attendance by growers. Growers may only be seen once every two

weeks. In late September or early October, the growers return to harvest the plants, leaving the roots and waste items behind.

Marijuana plants are bright green, the leaves have seven jagged fingers, they grow between three and five feet in height and give off an odour similar to that of a skunk.

Common indicators of outdoor marijuana grow include:

- Abandoned vehicles parked on side roads or trails
- Repeated attendance to remote locations
- People observed walking in remote areas for no

apparent reason

- Persons trespassing onto fields on foot or by off road vehicles

- Bags of fertilizer, planting trays or chemicals located in remote areas or dumped at the side of the road

- Well trampled trails in wooded or swamp areas

- Cleared out areas in swamps, wooded area or corn fields

- Posted signs within forests, corn fields which appear out of nowhere indicating “No Trespassing.”

If you discover an outdoor marijuana operation call the Halton Regional Police Service Drug Unit 905-465-8732 or contact

Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), by texting SMS# CRIMES (274637) or by visiting Crime Stoppers Online ([www.haltoncrimestoppers.com](http://www.haltoncrimestoppers.com)). If the matter is urgent, members of the public are directed to call 905-878-5511.

Police also advise the public:

- Do not touch the marijuana plants due to possible chemicals on them.

- If confronted by a marijuana grower, just leave the area, record any licence plates and call police.

- Do not approach an outdoor grow, due to the low percentage of grows being booby trapped or guarded.

## Fire Report

### Storm damage

A large willow tree damaged in Sunday afternoon's fierce storm did not cause any structural damage when it clipped the

corner of a Church Street West residence as it fell. Acton firefighters checked for damage and advised the homeowner to call an arborist to remove the tree.

### Pole fire

Acton firefighters secured the area of the Fifth Line and 22 Side Road just before 11 on Saturday morning when they received a report of downed hydro wires that were arcing and had set the hydro pole on fire.

### False alarm

A Tanners Drive homeowner was advised to have a carbon monoxide detector replaced after Acton firefighters could not find any trace of the gas when they responded to alarm activation at 10:48 last Wednesday night.

### False alarm

Acton firefighters determined that two propane tanks were venting as they were designed to and not leaking when they responded to a call to the 17 Side Road-Third Line area last Tuesday.

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