



Metsoland file photo

Halton police have a new tool to identify suspects in retail thefts.

## LOOK OUT STORE THIEVES: HALTON POLICE UNVEILS RETAIL C.O.P.

## LOSS PREVENTION OFFICERS CAN ACCESS SUSPECT IMAGES

TIM WHITNELL

twhitnell@metrolog

twhitnell@metroland.com

Halton Regional Police has a new tool to help identify suspects of retail thefts in the region.

The service says it is the first in Ontario to utilize a website dubbed Retail C.O.P. (Cameras on Patrol).

Images of suspects in retail thefts, along with brief suspect descriptions, are uploaded to a secure site operated and monitored by Halton police.

The images are gathered from retail store surveillance cameras. Loss prevention officers are then provided access to the website in the hope of helping to identify suspects.

The site was live as of Friday.

Any tips about suspects that are generated are sent to the Halton police's Retail Theft Unit for investigation.

The program provides retailers, security, loss prevention and law enforcement agencies opportunities to identify offenders and, through education, reduce and prevent organized retail crime, and prosecute identified offenders.

Retailers/loss prevention officers have to be vetted by Halton police in order to gain access to the site. So far Halton police has trained more than 100 loss prevention officers from across Ontario to take part in the program.

"The reception has been fantastic. By tapping into the knowledge and experience of the loss prevention officers on the ground in stores across Halton we are taking advantage of a previously underutilized resource," said Insp. Bob Gourley of Burlington district operations.

Halton police says retail theft costs Canadians \$4 billion year, with those costs being passed on to consumers. This year to date, there have been more than 1,000 occurrences of retail theft reported to police in Halton.

Halton's Retail Theft Unit says it has made more than 200 positive suspect identifications by working with loss prevention officers and using existing tools such as social media.