

# Halton will fine false alarm repeat offenders

By BRAD REAUME  
The Champion

Alarm monitoring companies are making money by using taxpayer-paid police, according to Oakville Councillor Keith Bird. He says companies should be made to pay for at least a portion of the services they demand.

About 96 per cent of the almost 6,000 calls received last year were false alarms, Mr. Bird said. Each call requires a substantial amount of police resources to investigate.

Last Wednesday regional council agreed to start charging alarm companies for each false alarm in an attempt to recover some costs and ultimately reduce the number of calls. The program will run as a trial until November, 1998.

Police will offer a registration program for monitored alarms. The first false alarm on a registered location will be free, with homes paying \$30 after that and businesses \$60. False alarms at unregistered locations will cost \$50 for homeowners and \$100 for businesses. The registration fee is \$24 for private residences and \$48 for businesses.

After four false alarms in a 12-month period the police will not respond to alarm calls there and place it on suspension for one year.

"People are making money off our police services," said Mr. Bird. "They are wasting resources and they get to pocket the money. False alarms take police off the streets and ultimately put the rest of the community at risk."

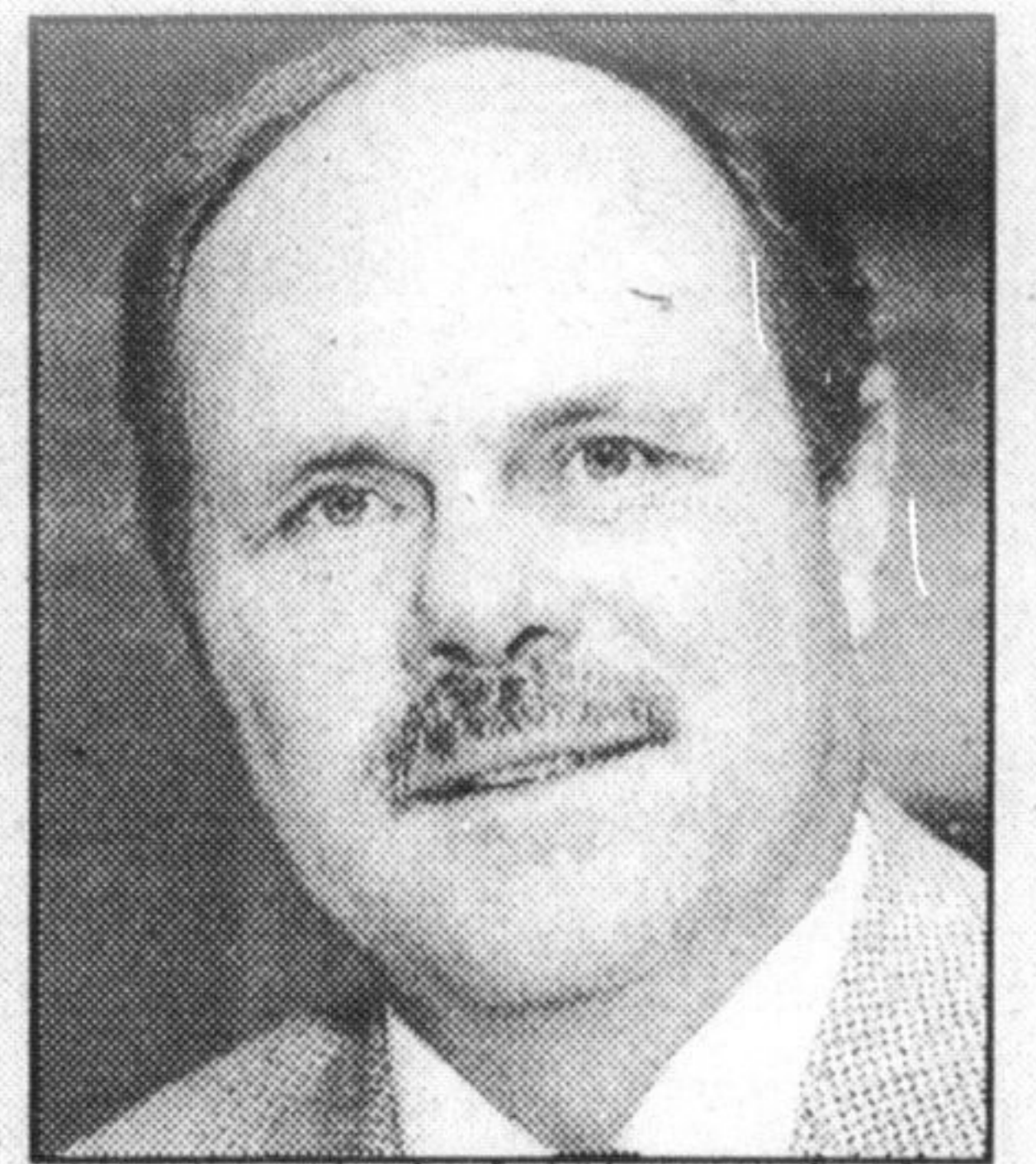
Halton police Chief Peter Campbell admitted there is a potential for a civil suit against the region if police fail to respond to a legitimate alarm. However, the suspension program has been in place in Halton and other jurisdictions for several years without any legal proceedings filed. Chief Campbell said he would prefer not to have to institute the charge but given fiscal realities, he saw no other choice.

"From a philosophical standpoint I find this repugnant," he said. "It is not the way I would like to do business but in the economic climate of today we have to contain our costs. I would like council to say, 'Don't institute these charges and we'll give you an extra \$500,000 to cover the costs'."

Chief Campbell admitted the program could lead to other police user fees but said given the Police Act and other regulations it is hard to say what will happen.

According to police Staff Sergeant Peter Whittaker the actual cost in officer response for false alarms is about \$376,000 per year. There is a potential for about \$300,000 in registration fees and an additional \$400,000 in false alarm charges, though police said they did not expect to see anywhere near the total potential

• see FALSE on page 9



**"False alarms take police off the streets and ultimately put the rest of the community at risk."**

KEITH BIRD

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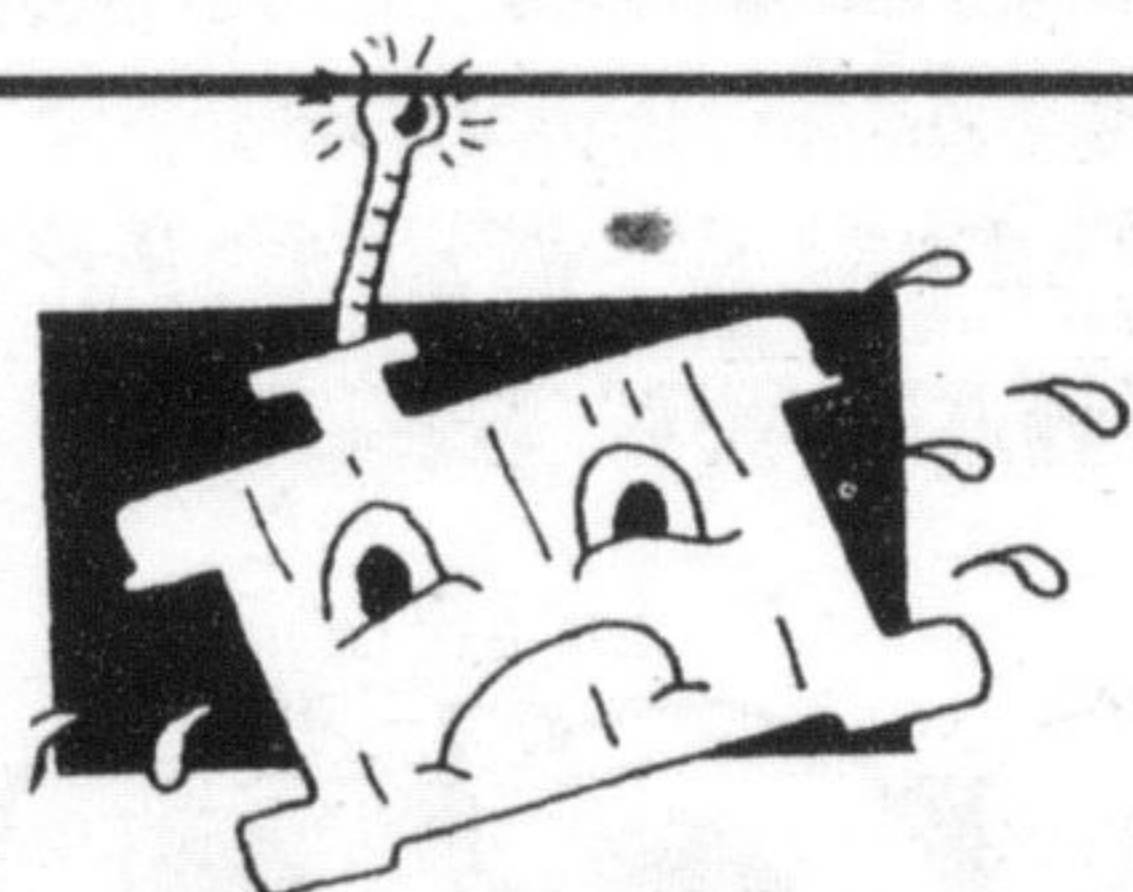
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