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# Cop board says chopper worth a trial run

By LISA TALLYN  
Special to The Champion

By the end of next year Halton police could have a helicopter in the sky scanning the region for criminals, missing persons and marijuana crops.

At a meeting in Georgetown recently the Halton Regional Police Services Board took a step towards launching the one-year pilot chopper program by approving in principle the concept of a privately-funded joint air support program with Hamilton-Wentworth.

Board members also supported an amendment put forward by board member Barry Quinn that the idea be contingent on the chairs of Halton and Hamilton-Wentworth raising money from corporations and the community to pay for it.

The cost of operating a helicopter equipped with a searchlight, infrared system, and communication gear in the two regions, four shifts per week is estimated at \$489,000 per year — to be shared between both regions.

Police officers won't pilot the helicopter

but officers are to be on board as observers.

The benefits of the helicopter were laid out in a report on the proposal from Police Chief Peter Campbell. The helicopter is to:

- Reduce the duration of high speed chases by police,
- Cut response time to alarm calls by 25 per cent,
- Reduce house break and enters, business break-ins, theft of vehicles and robberies all by 10 per cent and
- Increase the number of possession and

cultivation of narcotic charges by 500 per cent.

Chief Campbell said the police department's air patrol program in Calgary has a 100 per cent apprehension rate in high speed pursuits. Board member Kelly Culin said he finds it difficult to believe the helicopter will be able to meet the expected targets.

"I don't think we can compare our situation to Calgary," said Mr. Culin. "The proof will be in the pudding," said Chief Campbell. He said by operating the program on a lease basis it will be easy to shut down if results aren't there.

"It is useless if it (the helicopter) is not close," said Chief Campbell. He added the chopper would likely spend most of its time in south Halton and downtown Hamilton.

In the rural areas it could be used to spot marijuana crops. "I think there is probably a lot more marijuana grown up here (in north Halton) than we know about," said Chief Campbell.

In light of the fact funding has to be secured for the helicopter Chief Campbell said it likely wouldn't be in the air until mid to late 1998.

## Going for a region seat

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should look at ways to reduce spending.

He said he believes in less government, including the abolishment of regional government, and supports the reduction of town council from the current 11 members to seven.

He also said Milton must begin moving toward expansion — "a gradual controlled growth based on the capability of existing local water supplies.

"The only expansion we have seen in Milton is the proposed introduction of 1,000 more prisoners into Maplehurst."

At press time yesterday, no one else had filed to run for the position.

Those who have indicated their candidacies in the November municipal election include incumbents Art Melanson and Wally Hunter (Ward 2 councillor), incumbents Ron Furik and John Challinor (Ward 4 councillor), incumbent Barry Lee (Wards 1 and 3 regional councillor), incumbent Brian Penman and Rick Day (Ward 1 councillor), Liven Gevaert and Irene Grier (Ward 3 councillor), Murray Inglis (Ward 3 hydro commissioner), Jack Robertson (Ward 4 hydro commissioner), Sharon Barklay (Ward 1 hydro commissioner), and Bill Rowney (Ward 2 hydro commissioner).

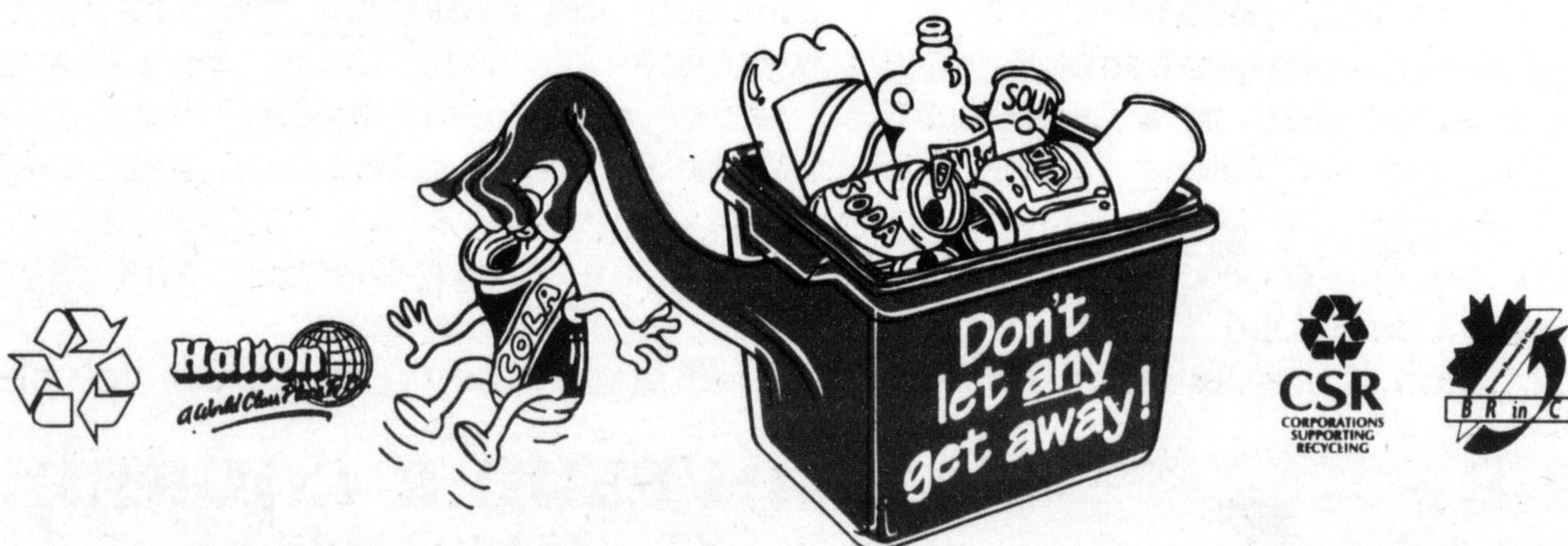
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