

School gym is still closed, principal does a slow burn

By **KAREN SMITH**

The Champion

The fire-gutted E.C. Drury sports complex remains closed while a provincial government agency that owns the building receives tenders, a frustrated high school principal said.

E.C. Drury High School principal Linda Heaver said she's angry that it's taking so long to repair the gym, which is sealed off after being targeted by vandals in January.

"There's been basically nothing done," she said. "We appear to have very little influence."

The deadline for tenders from contractors interested in repairing the building is the end of April and the work is expected to be completed by the start of the next school year in September, Ms Heaver said.

The building is owned by the Ontario Realty Corporation, a provincial government agency, and the

contents belong to the Halton District School Board.

Meanwhile, Halton Regional Police detectives continue to investigate the suspicious fire, which ripped through one of two gymnasiums and an upstairs wrestling room, causing smoke damage to most of the free-standing building. The building also houses a swimming pool and offices.

Destroyed were expensive wrestling mats, basketball nets and championship banners.

Investigators, who believe the fire was deliberately set, have interviewed several people from those who have heard rumours to possible suspects.

"There was no tangible result from the interviews. We're still seeking out more evidence," Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon said.

Anyone with information can contact Crime Stoppers at 825-TIPS or Det. Constable Owen Gray at 878-5511, ext. 2419.

Crime statistics at a glance

Halton Regional Police Chief Ean Algar arrived at a recent administration and finance committee meeting armed with statistics showing that Halton's crime clearance rate is above both the provincial and national averages.

Last year, Halton boasted a 43 per cent clearance, while Ontario and Canada weighed in the mid-thirties.



Ean Algar

Last year, Halton police answered 82,000 calls. While that number is down overall, more calls were logged in Burlington and Milton than in the previous year.

Halton calls were also up in the first quarter of this year. Much of that can be attributed to accidents in January of this year.

The 1998 record reports a dramatic drop in auto thefts, as well as break and enters. Property crimes were also substantially reduced.

• see SLAMS on page 9

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