

Youth accidentally shot himself, allege police after intensive probe

By **KAREN SMITH**
The Champion

A youth who reported being shot in the arm by two robbers at Rotary Park last month actually fired a bullet into himself, police allege.

Following a three-week investigation, Halton Regional Police have charged a 17-year-old Halton Hills youth with possession of an unregistered, restricted weapon and public mischief for allegedly making up the story.

It's alleged the youth was playing with a gun at Rotary Park, trying to figure out how to work it, when he accidentally fired a bullet into his left shoulder.

Forensic evidence was key in the investigation that detectives worked on diligently due to the serious nature of the incident and public concern, said Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon.

"I'm extremely pleased with the honesty of all the students and witnesses who were interviewed," she said.

A 25-calibre handgun, which has been seized by police, was allegedly purchased by the youth from another male.

The pistol had been buried in another park in Milton.

The investigation began after a youth reported to police at 11 p.m. March 26 that he was shot at Rotary Park. The teen told police he was approached by two males, one of whom produced a small calibre

handgun and demanded his wallet.

He told detectives that when he refused, he was shot in the shoulder and the pair fled on foot.

The youth reported that after the shooting, he returned to the social event he was at prior to going to the park. He was eventually taken to Milton District Hospital, where he was treated and released.

The youth also provided investigators with a detailed description of suspects.

The youth will face his charges in Milton court May 21.

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Halton Hills Councillor John Day wondered if there was a way Halton could keep track of where the pooled money was going.

"Do we get back how that money is spent?" he asked.

"Is Toronto able to offer programs outside of what we would call social services from that money?"

There is no detailed accounting of where the money is spent, said Halton's finance commissioner, Joe Rinaldo.

"We do know there are some service levels that are higher in Toronto than we get here in Halton," he added.

Halton may deserve to absorb some of Toronto's social costs, pointed out Mr. Dennison.

"To really accurately assess that we'd have to understand where the social costs are coming from," he said.

"We don't have a lot of social housing in Halton. Maybe some of that 22 per cent is legitimate."

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