

# No link proven between drugs and theft crimes

*Police try to prove link between the drug trade and theft-related offences, but information is lacking*

By IRENE GENTLE  
The Champion

A recent drug project in Milton and Oakville didn't yield enough information to prove a strong link between drug use and crimes such as theft and break and enter, said Halton Regional Police Staff Sgt. Roy Smith.

The idea behind the youth-targeted Drug Interdiction Unit Project was to cross-check if those involved with drugs were also embroiled in other areas of criminal activity.

"The whole purpose was to see if we could associate the two, but I don't think we had enough data to show a direct link in this small project," said Staff Sgt. Smith.

"It would be wrong for us to jump to that conclusion with this data."

### Many arrests and charges

But the project did manage to bring in 74 arrests during its six-week run

That led to 48 charges under the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act.

Most of the arrests involved possession of marijuana.

But hashish, methamphetamine, ecstasy, psylobin, and GHB, which is one of the so-called date rape drugs, were also found.

The project was initiated by Halton officers Roger Wilkie of Oakville and Jeff Sandy of Milton.

They devoted 20 shifts to the undertaking between September 1 and October 14, splitting their time equally between the two municipalities.

"Two of our junior officers came up with the idea that much of (certain types of) crime was related to drug activity," said Staff Sgt. Smith.

"Two young officers did this alone. I thought it was pretty impressive."

### Focus on drug possession

Simple drug possession was the focus of the project rather than trafficking, he added.

Of the 48 charges laid, nine of the accused were female.

The youngest to be charged was a 15-year-old who had been dealing from his parents' home. A 28 year old man was the oldest person charged.

And more offenders were found in Oakville than Milton, said Staff Sgt. Smith.

"Obviously there was more activity in Oakville because it's a bigger centre," he said.

The officers concentrated on the project during their regular shifts, but were called away for regular duty when needed.

Ironically, the project unfolded on the heels of a recommendation from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police that small amounts of marijuana and cannabis derivatives — amounts of which would warrant a possession charge only — be decriminalized.

### Supported by police association

That recommendation was also supported by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

If passed, that would mean possession of the drugs would continue to be illegal, but not criminal.

The proposal was aimed at unclogging crowded court dockets while funnelling offenders into more useful treatment models.

But since the recommendation has not yet been approved, Halton officers are

committed to upholding the law as it now stands, said Staff Sgt. Smith.

He noted that despite the small project sampling, the officers did come away with some observations.

One is that drugs are increasingly picked over alcohol as the substance of choice for youths.

"Every high school has several drug suppliers," said Staff Sgt. Smith. "And it can go undetected by parents. With alcohol, you have the smell on the breath."

Another was that chemical drugs such as ecstasy are becoming more prevalent.

The reason is it can provide more bang for the buck, said Staff Sgt. Smith.

"With one tablet of ecstasy, you can get an eight-hour buzz," he said.

While the initiative will not be entirely discontinued, a repetition of the project is unlikely, said Staff Sgt. Smith.

"We have a staffing problem," he said.

"We can't afford to put someone on one project."

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