



# COMMENT



## THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Here's a home-grown solution to pot houses

In recent months, Halton Regional Police have raided several homes throughout Halton where highly-lucrative, home-grown hydroponic marijuana operations have been discovered.

While some may argue police resources could be better used in targeting more serious drug operations, the fact remains, using and growing marijuana is a criminal offence and police should be busting these pot houses.

And let's be honest, the people who operate these marijuana operations aren't choir boys and are likely involved in other illegal activities.

As reported elsewhere in this newspaper, Halton residents can help officers shut down pot-growing operations — which are actually found in highly-populated middle class neighbourhoods — by simply being observant.

Clues to look for are houses with covered windows, unusual noises such as hammering or drilling into the basement foundation, little or no garbage being put out, houses where the residents show up to shovel snow or cut grass then leave soon after or people bringing unusual objects like bags of soil into the house.

Residents who want to report suspicious activity should call Crime Stoppers at (905) 825-8477. Working with the police, Halton residents can make their neighbourhoods a safer place to be.

## Under-12 Outreach Project step in right direction

Kudos to Halton Regional Police.

With the help of some federal funding and community partners, our region's finest are reaching out to at-risk boys through its new Under-12 Outreach Project.

Scheduled to start later this month, the proactive program is aimed at identifying pre-teen males who are at risk of committing criminal offences and guide them toward a law-abiding path.

It's just too bad this project wasn't implemented years ago.

My family moved to Milton when I was about 11 (more than two decades ago, geez!) and over the next few years I had quite a few friends that would now have been considered "at-risk."

It's not that easy to say just why — you can't always blame it on shoddy parenting (although that may have been a contributing factor in a

couple of cases) — but for whatever reason they just didn't feel accountable for their actions. Heck, I guess I didn't either at times.

But a project like this can certainly help sway youngsters away from that attitude.

Sure, it's a long way from prison and it's probably not going to make too many potential participants quake in their proverbial boots, but it will teach boys that there are consequences for their actions — at any age.

Once a boy is identified as being "at-risk," counselling services take place at a designated school in that municipality.

That's a great way to start, but perhaps the program could be expanded somewhat to not only show youngsters that there are consequences to their actions but that there are alternatives to criminal behaviour.

Often it's sheer boredom that gets young boys



with STEVE LeBLANC

hooked on petty mischief and while it usually stops there, escalated acts can and do occur when boys aren't held accountable.

Joining forces with youth groups and people in the business community — ones willing to work with a youngster to teach him a constructive trade rather than just sticking him in some menial part-time job — could strengthen the program's

potential for success.

Of course there's not too many pre-teen boys ready for the workforce, but finding things for the program's participants to do rather than just telling them what they can't do would be an effective tool.

Those suggestions aside, the Under-12 Outreach Project is definitely a good step toward proactive policing within Halton.

Needless to say, the success of a program like this is tough to measure. After all, many of its participants are only "at-risk" boys who wouldn't necessarily turn to crime if left to their own devices.

But as Supt. Dan Okuloski — who's spearheading the project — said, "if we can keep two kids out of jail, it's paid for itself."

I wholeheartedly agree.



## OUR READERS WRITE

### Mr. Malboeuf's opposition to fellow councillor's flyer is astounding and shameful, says reader

Dear Editor:

I'm astounded that Councillor Rick Malboeuf would interfere with Councillor John Challinor's initiative to help a local ratepayers' group.

The Friends of E.C. Drury Park now face punishing debt for their efforts on behalf of the community.

Shame on Mr. Malboeuf for making charges of influence peddling.

I clearly recall Mr. Malboeuf

glad-handing at various open houses held by the developer for the Drury Park development, advising people to go along with the proposal.

And shame on him for suggesting that the Friends of E.C. Drury Park is a special interest group.

These people are our neighbours. They live in the community, they tried to save a park and playing field for everyone. The only special

interest is the developer, who is in this for the money.

A group of citizens stood up against overwhelming forces to give a voice to the feelings of their community.

They tried to make a difference. A lot of us talk, they acted. And they lost. We should be thanking them and helping them out of a jam.

Chris Myers  
Childs Drive

Have your say with a letter to the editor. Send your letters by fax, e-mail or drop them off to us.