

OPINION

Matter of trust

Recent revelations that Halton Regional Police Deputy Chief Mike Kingston lied about having a university degree on four occasions since 1999 makes us question whether the punishment fit his 'crimes'.

Up until last week, the 29-year veteran of Halton's force gave us no reason to consider him anything other than a model officer who had worked his way up the ranks of the service with good old fashioned hard work. Had it not been for a letter submitted to the region's police services board 13 months ago, we might still believe that.

The Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services had this to say about Kingston's actions:

"The first misrepresentation in 1999 set the stage for a series of deceptions. Each instance of deceit built on the previous one. Each was an ethical breach that, over time, became more difficult to undo without considerable risk."

We still believe Chief Ean Algar and the police board's assessment of Mike Kingston as a good police officer; we just aren't sure if we can trust the deputy chief after he perpetrated the same lie four times in less than six years. That's an enormous indiscretion to overlook from Halton's third highest ranking police officer.

We find it disturbing the only thing preventing Kingston from a demotion or suspension is that the police service is in the midst of replacing the retiring chief and can't afford to be without two of its most senior officers simultaneously.

Equally disturbing is the slap on the wrist of lost vacation time the deputy chief received for his lies. We doubt an entry level constable would have survived the same investigation with his career intact.

In a profession built on public trust, perception is reality.

Kingston's light sentence gives the appearance of a police service unwilling to do the right thing — demote a senior officer found to have repeatedly made a mockery of the service and dishonoured the uniform.

Kingston's 'crime' wasn't the unwise decision of an inexperienced, immature new recruit. It was the conscious decision of a veteran police officer in his mid-to-late forties with more than two decades of policing experience under his belt.

What message does the deputy chief's actions and the almost negligible penalty send to Halton's lower ranking police officers? What message does it send to the public?

Kingston does the police service's reputation further harm by his plans to seek financial reimbursement for the courses he's taking in order to complete the degree he lied about.

Had it not been for the mysterious letter that exposed his deception last year, the deputy chief said he might have applied for the chief's job, which undoubtedly would have led to more lies.



Readers Write

Send us your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

Garbage reduction initiatives needed

DEAR EDITOR:

Looking for ways to reduce the quantity of trash going to landfill requires innovative thinking coupled to tax reduction incentives, not increased unfairness and more tax increases.

In the last 10 years or so, my family's garbage output has been reduced by over 90 per cent, yet our costs for garbage disposal — via our taxes — have gone up well over 500 per cent.

Something is dreadfully wrong with

this picture, wouldn't you say? It's just unfair.

A while back we took it upon ourselves to look at all the ways we could generate less garbage for disposal. Though it was more expensive to ourselves, we felt it was a good idea, as it would help save our environment and use less landfill space.

We shopped selectively, cutting back on all over-packaged products, and

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Aroundtown

To be a hero or to be a fool — that's the question

Hero or fool? Sometimes it's a fine line, particularly when people choose to take matters into their own hands upon witnessing a crime.

In the past two weeks in Milton, there have been two cases of men who have tried to restrain alleged criminals until police arrived. In one case it worked out well, in another not as well — although it didn't have the disastrous consequences it could have had.

In the first incident March 25, a passerby saw a man being hit with a baseball bat at a local park. As the victim was fleeing the scene, the witness chased one of the suspects, tackled him to the ground and held him until police arrived to arrest him.

In the second incident, reported in this paper, a man was returning to his vehicle Monday after walking his dog when he noticed someone in the midst of breaking

into it. The man, understandably upset, confronted the suspect and grabbed hold of him. He let go when the suspect began swinging a screwdriver at him, trying to break free. The suspect fled and police are investigating.

Now, I'm all for helping your fellow man. But there's a time and a place for thinking of your own safety. In the first incident, the victim had already been released by the suspect and was no longer in danger. In the second, the suspect was fighting to protect his Trailblazer, not a person.

A chat with Halton Regional Police Det. Sgt. Peter Hodgson confirmed what I already knew. "We never recommend trying to apprehend someone. You don't know if they're armed. In this case it was a screwdriv-

er, but it could've been a knife or a gun."

People often don't think clearly in the heat of the moment, he said, hence the sometimes unwise actions. Couple that with someone who's angry at the injustice being done, and you've got a potentially dangerous situation.

The best thing to do is take a good look at what's happening so you're a good witness, and then call police, Hodgson said.

In a case where someone's in danger, you need to calmly assess the situation to determine if you could be of help. Ask yourself questions like, is he bigger than me? Is he armed?

Even in those cases, often the best thing to do is yell for help.

Don't take it from me. Take it from police.



Stephanie Thiessen

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