

Crime Stoppers celebrating two decades of success

Dennis Smith
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Crime Stoppers of Halton has been a multi-million dollar success over two decades, helping recover nearly \$17 million in criminal property.

Supporters celebrated the program's 20th anniversary and launched Crime Stoppers Month at a ceremony last week at Burlington Holiday Inn.

"Crime Stoppers of Halton has a long and distinguished tradition of community service," said Halton chair Gary Carr. "It gets the public involved to identify suspects and crimes that might otherwise go unsolved, and helps to recover property and drugs."

The not-for-profit charitable organization provides a toll-free number (1-800-222-8477) enabling residents to anonymously report criminal activity.

Rewards of up to \$2,000 are offered for information leading to an arrest. Crime Stoppers has issued 864 rewards in Halton for a total of \$101,060 since 1988.

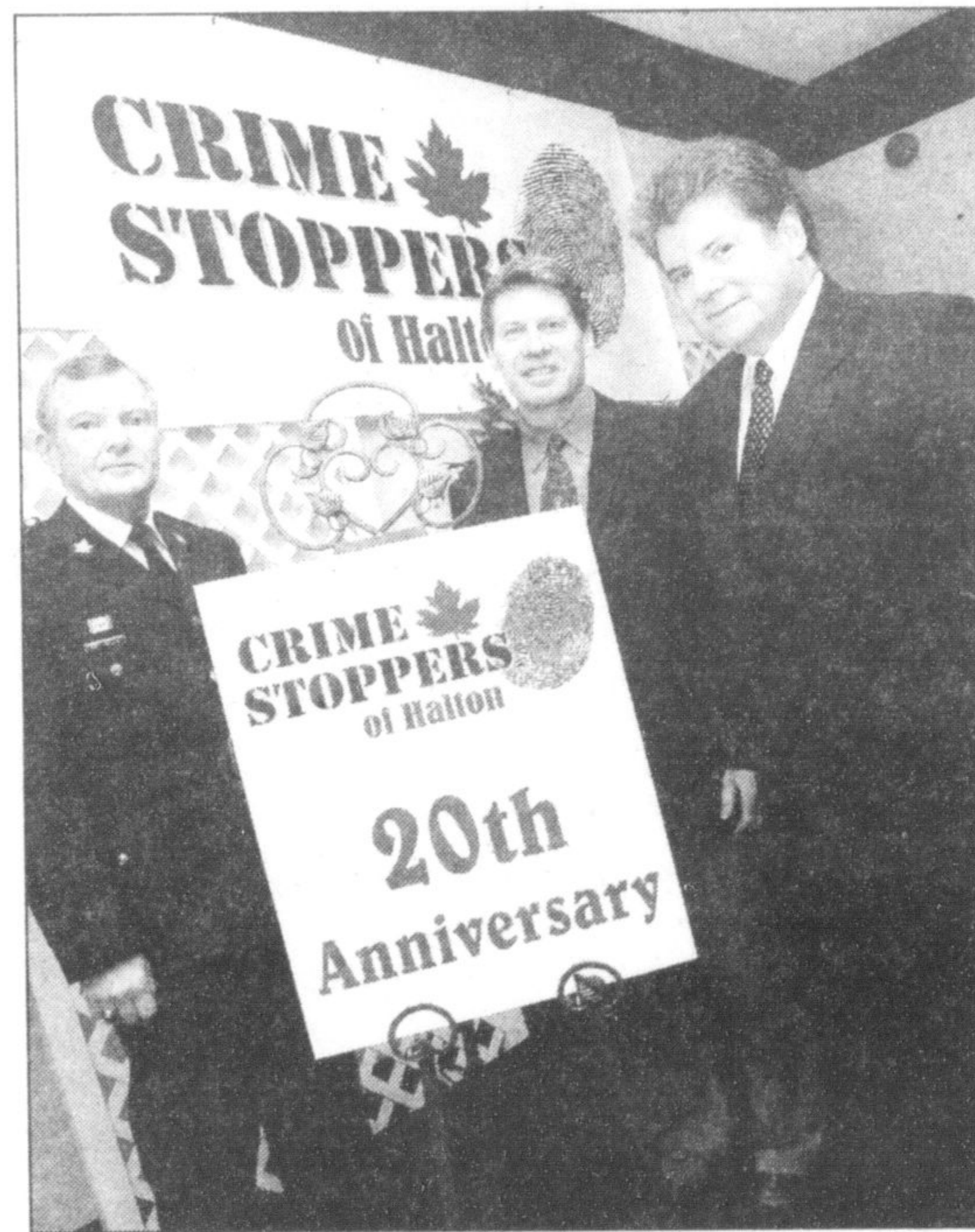
Through last year's program, \$792,725 in criminal property was recovered in Halton including nearly \$700,000 in narcotics. That's up sharply from the \$17,375 total recovered in 2006. Callers provided 633 tips to Crime Stoppers in 2007, clearing 61 cases and leading to 47 arrests.

Carr noted the program has helped Halton become one of Canada's safest communities of more than 100,000 residents.

"We know we'll continue to be able to work with Crime Stoppers and Halton Regional Police to continue to make sure our community is safe," he said. "Crime affects the community one way or another and it's something we must all be vigilant about."

Carr said technology is changing, with potential tipsters now able to take pictures on cell-phones.

He added that Internet crime and marijuana grow houses are much more common than when the Crime Stoppers program started 20 years ago.



LIESA KORTMANN / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION
MARKING A MILESTONE: From left, Halton Regional Police Chief Gary Crowell, Det. Gary Gold and Crime Stoppers International President Gary Murphy commemorate the 20th anniversary.

"Things have changed and we need to continue to improve," said Carr. "Only by doing that can we continue to be successful."

The co-ordinator of Halton Crime Stoppers, Det. Gary Gold, said there are plans to take tips via text messaging and a promotional video will soon be unveiled to enhance the school program.

"We have moved into the computer and high tech world and are making use of every communication tool that is now available to us," said Gold. "We are going to make full use of websites and the communication pathways now commonly used by a growing number of people, including students."

Halton Police Chief Gary Crowell said the pro-

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Cocaine case back in court

The case of a suspect in Halton's largest ever cocaine bust will return to court next month.

Brampton resident Avtar Sandhu, 39, was charged with possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking after his truck was pulled over in February 2007 at James Snow Parkway and Hwy. 401.

It's alleged more than 200 kg of

cocaine with a street value of \$20 million was discovered inside.

He'll make his next court appearance Tuesday, Feb. 5.

The return date was set January 8. Court heard that Sandhu's case will be handed over to a new lawyer since the lawyer he originally retained has suffered two strokes and is unable to continue.

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