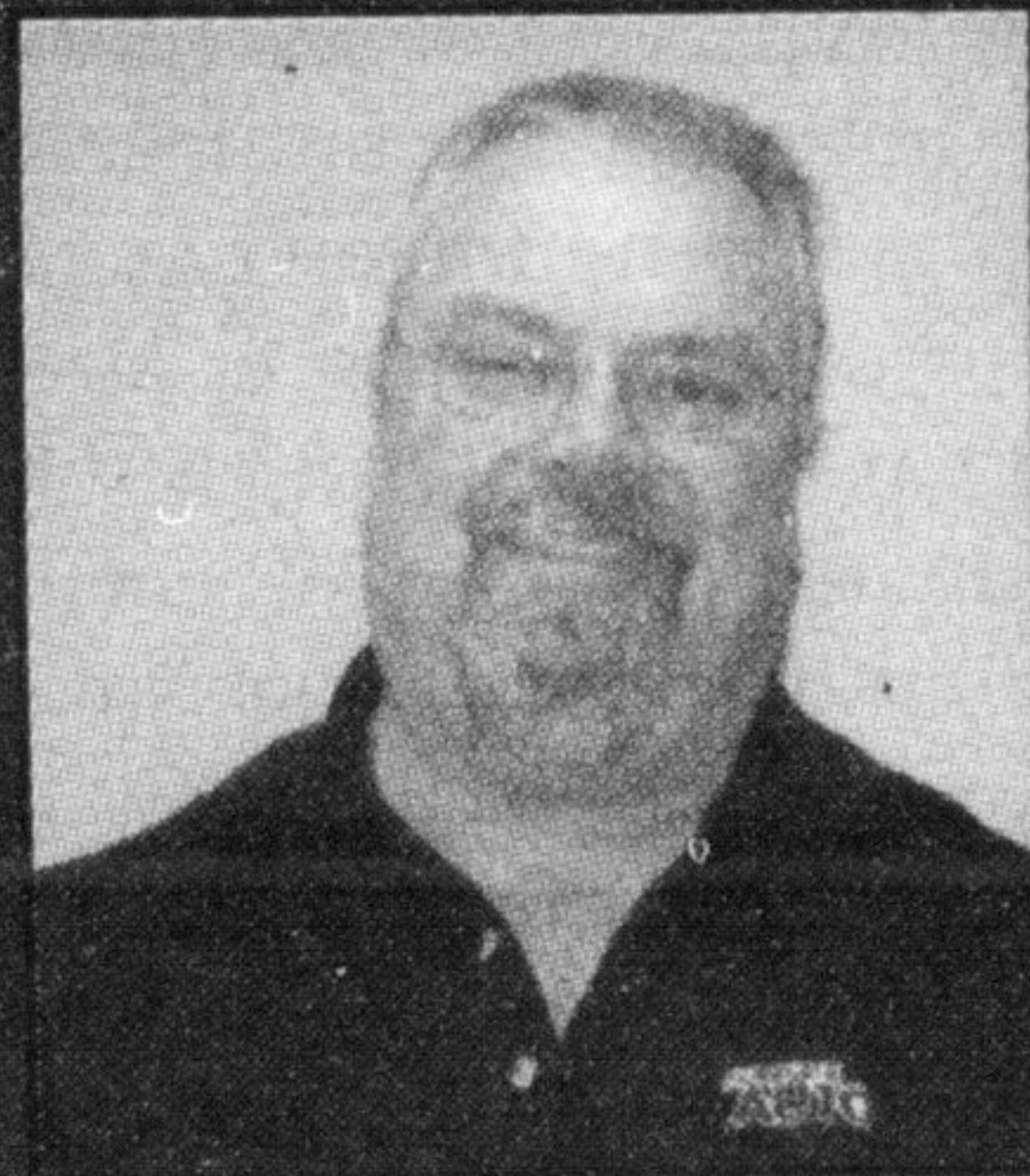




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Halton's crime rate down a bit last year

Halton police are reporting a small but significant decrease in overall crime last year.

According to statistics provided by the Halton Regional Police Niche system last week, there were 15,268 criminal occurrences in the region in 2008 compared to 15,526 in 2007 — representing a 4.5 per cent drop.

Perhaps most encouraging, the number of reported hate crimes in the region fell from 51 to 31, a 40 per cent decrease.

"Given the high rate of population growth in the region, this reduction of occurrences is very encouraging," said Halton Police Chief Gary Crowell.

Other big reductions were seen in arson and auto theft, which dropped 26 and 20 per cent respectively.

As well, there were 13.3 per cent fewer incidents of break and enter across Halton, while weapons offences fell 12.7 per cent and non-sexual assaults and robberies both dropped about 9 per cent.

However, one form of crime took a steep hike. Attributed to the growth of on-line scams, frauds rose a staggering 59.6 per cent — jumping from 854 to 1,363 incidents.

Meanwhile, the number of sexual assaults and possession of stolen goods cases also increased, as did impaired driving arrests.

Statistics also showed that there was a 26.5 per cent drop in the number of incidents where Halton police needed to use force, going from 207 in 2007 to 152 last year.

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