

Halton police officers on duty at G20 this weekend

By Tim Whitnell
METROLAND WEST
MEDIA GROUP

Close to 230 Halton police uniformed officers will provide security at the upcoming G20 conference in downtown Toronto.

Halton's contingent will be part of the 12,000-member throng of officers from various police services across Canada, including the RCMP, that will provide security at the political summit.

The high-level global economic summit, which is attracting world leaders, will take place this Saturday and Sunday.

Halton police Superintendent Signy Pittman, who's co-ordinating the service's involvement in the G20 security, said: "It's been a long process, a couple of months. They were provided excellent training, several hours of online training that they had to complete."

Pittman noted some Halton supervisory officers had to attend an intensive one-day G20 training session in person in Toronto.

She said Halton cops will be deployed in teams of about 30 along with some officers from other services. Halton's officers will wear their own uniform and a baseball cap.

The local police contingent is comprised of supervisors, constables, sergeants, staff sergeants and plainclothed intelligence officers.

Three marine unit officers are also being sent, along with the service's new police boat, to help patrol Toronto's harbour. One of the three marine officers will work aboard a Canadian Coast Guard vessel.

Halton Staff-Sgt. Chris Lawson, in charge of one of the 30-officer contingents, said his group will be used in the Interdiction Zone. They will patrol inside the long, tall metal fenced-in portion of the downtown.

"We'll be covering four city blocks," Lawson said of the area of responsibility for his three teams of 10 officers.

Lawson said the inner-control zone, in and around the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, is staffed by RCMP officers only.

Lawson said one battle officers will have to wage is with dehydration.

With hot weather forecast and with each officer carrying about 35 pounds of equipment all day, they'll need to use the many watering stations that have been set within the control zones.

"They will be supplied with a

communications system, a gas mask and a hard helmet. They carry everything they would carry with them on the front line," said Pittman, referring to handcuffs, a handgun, baton and pepper spray.

"We hope things go smoothly and everyone comes back safely," she said.

She noted Halton police is also sending a mix of civilian staff that will be deployed to the G20 staging

site to address cleaning, storage and the distribution of equipment required by front-line workers. The six individuals will work two different shifts and augment what the Toronto police service already has in place.

Pittman said Halton communities will have the same number of officers, or more, on or available for duty since the number of officers being sent to Toronto is balanced

by the suspension of vacations, other time off and decreased training time.

She said her understanding is that the entire cost of deploying the 230 Halton officers will be paid by the federal government.

Some Halton officers working in Toronto are on straight time and some are being paid overtime with the majority having volunteered for the G20 duty, said Pittman.



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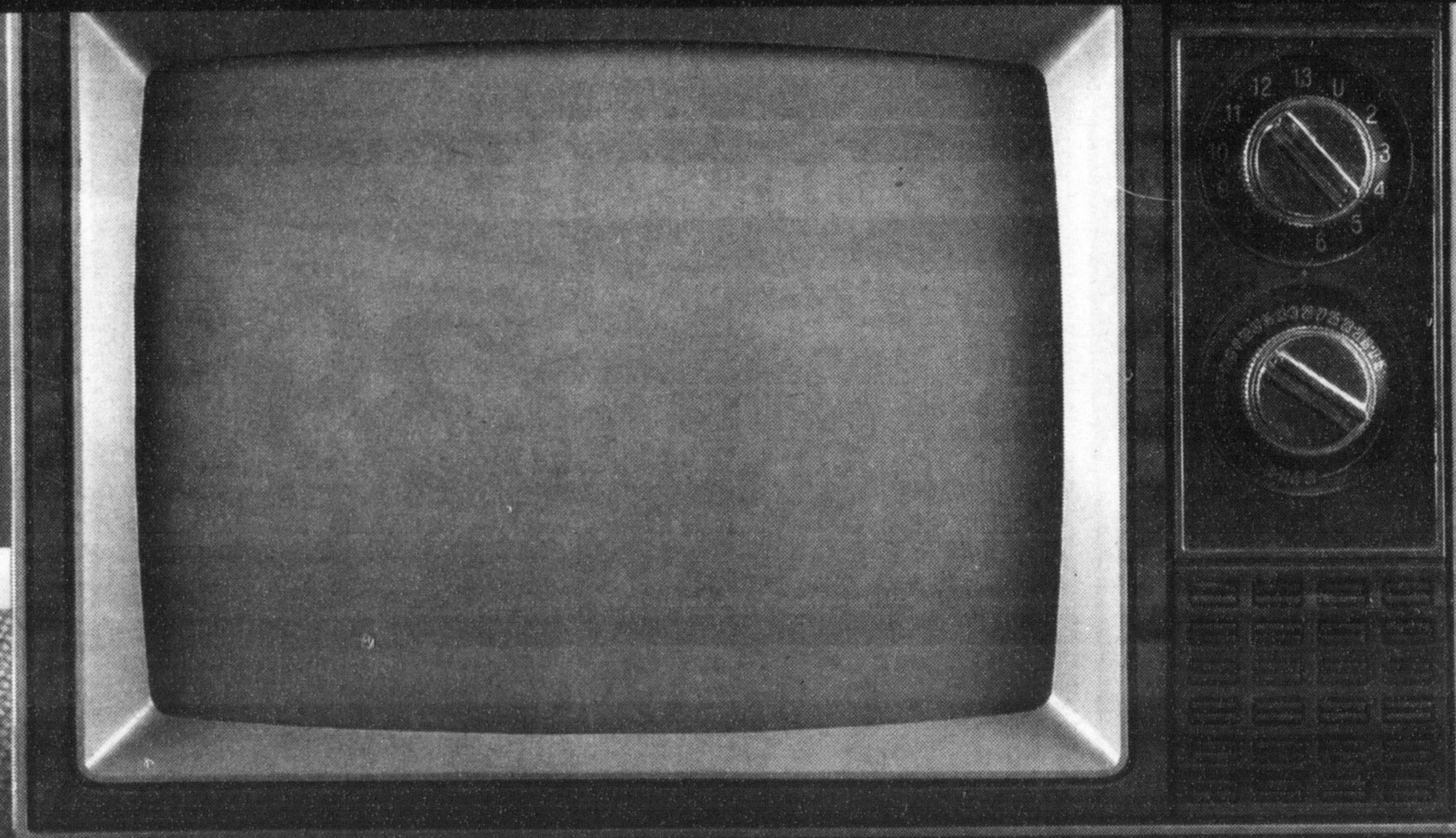
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