

Cops disappointed with sparse turnout for forum

By KAREN SMITH
The Champion

Only about 50 people attended a public forum to address concerns about youth crime in the community last week.

The sparse turnout was a disappointment for Sergeant Wayne Eastwood, one of the November 22 event's organizers.

The Halton Regional Police officer said judging by the number of complaints police receive about trouble-causing teenagers, he expected the auditorium of W.I. Dick School to be packed.

"This was a forum where people could voice their concerns," he said. "I was really disappointed."

Halton police organized the event in response to a disturbing amount of vandalism and other crime believed to be committed by youths in

residential areas of town.

"We have decided that this was the best way to deal with this issue," said Constable Sue Labanich, a community officer who headed the meeting.

Many of the 40 adults and about a dozen youths who did make it out commented that the forum was informative and a good idea.

But one woman asked, "How do you reach the parents who don't come to the meetings?"

About \$105,000 in property and damage loss has been caused in house break-ins between January 1 and November 16 this year, according to Constable Carol Buligan, Milton's crime prevention officer.

About \$57,000 has been lost in break-ins to businesses, and \$8,000 in school break-ins. Thefts from autos have totalled \$124,000, and \$53,000 worth of bicycles have been stolen.

Vandalism alone has accounted for a

\$150,000 loss in town since the beginning of the year, Constable Buligan said.

"How much of that is attributed to youth, I can't say. Obviously, some adults are involved there, too," she said.

"That's a substantial amount for a community the size of Milton. And that's only the stuff that's reported."

She said 39 per cent of victims of assaults in town so far this year have been teenagers. About 32 per cent of the perpetrators were also youths.

"It seems to me there's a problem with youths with conflict resolution," the constable said, "and they're turning to violence."

Katherine Livingstone-Pickett, a Halton crown attorney who has worked in criminal law for the last 15 years, told the crowd that younger kids are committing more vicious crimes. She said she has also noticed an

increased use of weapons.

Many young offenders see the criminal justice system as a joke, the Crown attorney said, and don't recognize the significant ramifications of their actions.

"They don't understand what the consequences are until they try to get a job, try to get a passport or apply to the university of their choice."

While first offences among youths may be treated with some compassion, repetition of criminal behaviour is treated seriously, she said. Repeat offenders for assault, theft or mischief could end up in an institution for teenaged criminals. "I think a lot of kids find it's not the joy ride they thought it was."

The forum was advertised on flyers sent home with public school students and a story was published on the front page of *The Champion*.

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Debate on school closing

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years. In 1993 there was limited activity."

The Milton campus offered a variety of programs, including a two-year construction technician diploma program and non-diploma programs for heavy equipment operators, mechanics, side boom operators, pipeline welding and truck driving.

It was the heavy field operation component of the school that saw substantial funding, through retraining programs, by the federal government. Throughout the life of the school, the federal financing helped make the campus as a whole viable, said Mr. King.

"They aren't purchasing the same amount of training because there have been major changes in government-sponsored programs and they felt the Halton-Peel student base was shrinking," said Mr. King.

In addition there have been cuts, experienced by educational institutions as a group, in education funding transferred from both the federal and provincial governments.

To relocate the school without assurance of economic viability, could jeopardize the college's other trades programs, said Mr. King.

The college will look to the future of its own six-acre campus site this spring. "We're debating whether we'll continue out of there with the truck driving," said Mr. King.

As far as a partnership with private enterprise to keep the school afloat, Mr. King said there just hasn't been the interest from anyone willing to guarantee \$1 million in operating costs.

Ward 3 Councillor Gerry Brooks said numerous local heavy equipment operators look to hire students with mechanical aptitude and hands-on experience with the heavy equipment. "They'd strongly recommend Sheridan not abandon that and you don't need land for that," said Mr. Brooks.

Country Christmas

Live birds of prey will perform demonstrations on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons in Campbellville as the village holds a country Christmas celebration.

There will also be a Christmas tree lighting ceremony tomorrow (Saturday) at 5:30 p.m. at the Campbellville Pond Park. Village shops will offer complimentary refreshments.

The birds are scheduled to be on display Saturday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

* Based on a 36 month lease for Trans Sport and Safari equipped as described. A minimum down payment of \$2,095/\$2,657 and \$350 security deposit are required. Some mileage conditions apply. Freight (\$745/\$820), license, insurance and taxes not included. Offer applies to 1995 new or demonstrator models. Dealer order or trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell/lease for less. Offer applies to qualified retail customers only. Limited time offer may not be combined or used with other offers. See your Dealer for details.