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NEWSLINES

Cap-gun toting youths cause scare on Hwy. 401

Milton OPP officers joined forces with their Cambridge and Guelph counterparts in a "high-risk takedown" in Milton Saturday.

A group of youngsters reportedly reaked havoc with a toy cap gun on Highway 401.

According to an OPP press release, the gunplay began at about 5 p.m. in Puslinch Township where an independent witness advised police that a group of males in a car were taking potshots with a handgun at vehicles on the highway.

The witness said the males had the gun outside the window and were pointing it at at least four vehicles. The males inside the vehicle were laughing at the motorists as the events unfolded.

The three OPP detachments were called in and stopped a vehicle at an eastbound Hwy. 401 vehicle inspection station in Milton. Officers conducted a high risk takedown, and all four occupants in the vehicle were arrested without incident.

Police seized a small black cap gun similar to a derringer, caps, and two balaclavas.

Three youths were charged with weapons dangerous to the public peace and have been released. The driver of the vehicle was not charged.

Hwy. 401 traffic came to a standstill during the entire incident.

Jail guards refuse to work; cite safety issues

By KIM ARNOTT

Special to The Champion

Citing unhealthy working conditions and unresolved health and safety issues, striking correctional officers are refusing to report to work at the Maplehurst Adult Training Centre.

"Our health and safety issues haven't been addressed," said picket captain Stan Akey. "We need an on-site inspection."

Correctional officers, who are required to provide essential services during the strike by members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), have refused to enter the institution since midnight Tuesday.

They say overworked management staff and an unsearched building are among their health and safety concerns.

"If (the institution) is not searched on a regular basis, it becomes a dangerous place," said Mr. Akey.

He added that management staff, many of whom are working more than 70 hours a week, are tired, and often untrained for the jobs they are doing.

Maplehurst superintendent Iain Leithead confirmed that management staff had taken over the duties of correctional officers when the last of the OPSEU guards left the building early Tuesday morning.

Mr. Leithead said he didn't want to comment on the situation and was waiting for the union to call him to discuss the situation.

"We're concerned really about the public safety and we're doing our best to ensure the institution is secure," said Mr. Leithead.

Other OPSEU members performing essential service jobs remain in the building, he added.

Union members say they've received no official response to their walkout, but are demanding an inspection of the building by an occupational health and safety inspector before they return.

However, inspectors are members of OPSEU and are on strike. A skeleton staff of managers are issuing health and safety decisions over the telephone, according to union representatives.

In Halton

Taxes may decrease if councillor has his way

By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

Fighting an uphill battle, Burlington councillor Jack Dennison plans to ask regional council today to provide a small amount of tax relief to Halton ratepayers.

At Monday's budget review committee, Mr. Dennison said he will try to convince council to approve a half of one per cent decrease in the 1996 regional tax levy.

"Because no other regions are providing a tax decrease it becomes all the more important for us to do it," said Mr. Dennison, who explained the move might encourage investment in Halton.

Mr. Dennison targeted \$250,000 from a proposal to resurface Derry Road between Guelph Line

and Bell School Line, \$117,800 from an Allendale stabilization fund and a further \$100,000 saved since January 1 in lower-than-expected welfare costs.

The proposed reduction would lower the average Halton tax bill by about \$1.60 given that only 14 cents of every property tax dollar goes to the Region. The average ratepayer in Halton pays about \$318 for regional services.

Joe Rinaldo, commissioner of corporate services, said that budget items needed to be considered in light of their sustainability. He warned against a see-saw tax rate which would reduce taxes by making large cuts this year only to face the possibility of raising taxes next year when even more provincial cutbacks are expected. Halton lost \$4.9 million in funding from the

province for 1996 and is expecting to lose a further \$3.9 million in grants in 1997.

Committee members were not overly sympathetic to Mr. Dennison's proposals. The committee passed a recommendation to council essentially calling for a tax freeze for the Region. This proposal is expected to be debated today at Regional Council.

Burlington councillor Denis Lee said his municipality has experienced rapidly deteriorating roads because money was not spent on resurfacing projects which are a relatively cheap way to extend the life of roadways.

Mr. Dennison also called for budget money, which is put in place as a buffer against future budget pressure, be collected into a budget stabil-

• see LESS on page 9



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE


By the sugar bush trail

Ten-year-old Adam Bailey gets up close as he tries to catch a drop of maple sap from tapped trees at Mountsberg Conservation Area. Recent mild weather has started the saps running. See story on page 4.

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