

Police forces sharing resources

By DENNIS SMITH
Special to The Champion

Whether it's through boating or barking, local police believe they can do a better job by combining some services.

Joint initiatives for marine and canine policing, involving the Hamilton-Wentworth and Halton Regional Police forces, were announced recently.

The forces will combine to patrol Lake Ontario from Stoney Creek to Oakville. They will also have a strategic alliance to ensure nearly around-the-clock coverage by canine units.

"The bottom line is better service at a lower cost," said Halton Police Chief Peter Campbell. "It will help us with our road service, also. It will be improved because we have reduced commitments in these other areas."

Two of the police boats, including the Halton Star, will be moored at docking space donated by the Canada Centre for Inland Waters (CCIW), site of the press conference recently.

CCIW is located in Burlington on the Beach Strip, which straddles Hamilton Harbor and the west end of Lake Ontario.

"No one will notice the change in service," said Sgt. Frank Phillips of Halton's public affairs unit. "They'll be doing their rounds just the same. There will be more coverage now."

From May to October, there will be a joint forces boat patrolling daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., and another operating weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Coverage will be scaled down outside those months, but there'll still be a patrol available from late-March or April to December.

The two police forces will have four boats and one jet ski type craft available between them.

Although the Halton Star is moving from Bronte Harbor, another boat will be kept there for use by the village constable, who has marine training.

The Bronte vessel is a 5.5-metre (17-foot) Boston whaler, which has inner and outer hulls, plus a flat bottom, and is considered extremely rugged.

Police said the joint initiatives will enable them to provide more comprehensive coverage for both marine and canine patrols.

"Joint forces have had significant success in fighting crime," said Deputy-Chief Ken Robertson of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Service, citing experience with other police forces.

The new combined canine unit will cover both regions, but with improved availability. Canine units will now be on duty 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Halton Police have one dog/handler team and Hamilton-Wentworth Police have five.

If the program is successfully integrated, Hamilton-Wentworth may be able to reduce to four teams.

Rural animal lovers needed

Local animal lovers who live in rural areas are needed to help the Toronto Wildlife Centre in its release program.

Volunteers would act as a halfway house for raccoons, squirrels, opossums, etc., said Richard Francis of the organization. "If your property is suitable and you agree to participate, we would erect a cage on your land where these animals would stay until they are ready for release," he explained.

A raccoon cage would stay on properties for three months, while a squirrel cage would remain for one month.

"Both of these durations include the

back-up feeding time once the animals are released," Mr. Francis said. "You will have to feed and clean the cages daily so you must be committed."

Volunteers must live in a quiet, rural area away from major roads and not have neighbours close by. Properties should back onto woods, forests and ravines with a water source close by.

The Toronto Wildlife Centre cares for sick, injured and orphaned wildlife with the goal of releasing them back into the wild.

For more information, contact Mr. Francis at (905)949-0418.



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