

# Crime fighting help just a phone call away

By **HOWARD MOZEL**  
Special to *The Champion*

If successful, Communities on Phone Patrol (COPP) will not only make a dent in crime locally but also demonstrate co-operation on a multitude of levels.

The program will use volunteers armed with cell phones as extensions of officers on the beat to help curb everything from vandalism and break and enters to drug transactions. To help make it work, everyone from local police to the province are involved.

"Communities on Phone Patrol is a good example of how corporations, communities and government can work together," says Carolyn Russ, a vice president with Bell Mobility, as the initiative was unveiled last week.

Superintendent Richard Kivell said Halton Regional Police already have a reputation for innovation and creativity and COPP is further proof.

"Police services cannot combat crime alone," he said. "Commitment from the community is essential to the success of crime prevention."

Starting early next year in Milton, Halton Hills and Acton, COPP members will patrol by car and report suspicious activities to police via cellular phone. They will not, stressed Supt. Kivell, become involved in any way.

"There will be no intervention," he said. "We are not proposing this be a vigilante committee."

Volunteers will patrol "high-risk" areas

looking for possible criminal activity. Should a potential problem occur, police can be summoned by dialling 911 or by calling a liaison officer or base operator.

Bell Mobility is donating three cellular phones and free air time for the six-month pilot project.

According to Gary Carr, Oakville South MPP and parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and the Minister of Correctional Services, the province will assist in the evaluation of the program with an eye on implementing it throughout Ontario.

"Certainly the government believes every Ontarian has the right to feel safe in their own homes and communities," said Mr. Carr.

The program will be expanded into Oakville and Burlington later next year. COPP was approved in September by the Halton Regional Police Services Board.

According to Doug Magwood, the civilian volunteer in charge of developing the COPP manual, similar programs are underway in Vancouver and Kitchener to combat crack houses and prostitution.

"It really made an impact in those areas," he said.

Mr. Magwood explained the manual will be developed as the project continues since many factors - not the least of which are geographic - must be taken into account when policing individual areas of Halton.

Input from Halton's Criminal Investigation Bureau and uniform patrol officers will help determine which areas will be monitored.

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