

No charges related to selling of IZMS have been laid in Halton to date

"We did some proactive work earlier in the year. We tried to attend all the Love Shops, head shops and convenience stores in Halton. We had sent out officers earlier this year (spring) and found none," after visiting about a half-dozen stores in each of Milton, Burlington, Oakville and Halton Hills. However, in June a retail business in Burlington — for which Murray didn't want to give the name or location — was warned

by police about the selling product after an officer was able to purchase a packet of it.

The store operator was given a warning. On August 26, Hamilton police responded to an apartment in that city for a report of a 20-year-old male vomiting uncontrollably, and slipping in and out of consciousness. Hamilton police say the man had purchased and smoked IZMS. He was taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Hamilton police went to the store where the man allegedly bought the product and removed all of its remaining stock of IZMS.

On September 1, Halton officers visited a store in Milton and seized \$254 worth of IZMS product. Once again the store operator was given a warning.

No charges related to the selling of IZMS have been laid in Halton to date.

Murray said Halton police have talked to several business owners who didn't realize it is illegal to sell IZMS. In one case, police contacted the store's head office to make them aware of the product's illegality.

Officers will be making more visits sometime soon to stores that might sell the product, said Murray.

IZMS appears to be a brand name.

Halton police provided a research document on synthetic cannabinoids produced by the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR) at the University of Maryland. In it, the product is referred to by several names. More than 100 brand names have been identified, said the study, with the most popular in the U.S. being Spice and K2, but it is also available as Blaze, Fire 'n' Ice, G-Force, Solar Flare and Yucatan Fire.

"It comes in plastic packaging. It's a dried, leafy substance," that is likely smoked. "There are warnings on the back — don't be alone, don't make important phone calls," if you use the product, said Murray.

He said they are fairly cheap, anywhere from \$5 to \$20 for packages that can weigh between three and six grams.

The CESAR research report says that as of May 4, 2011, 24 U.S. states had enacted legislation and 24 had legislation pending banning one or more synthetic cannabinoids.

In Canada, synthetic cannabinoids are illegal under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA).

The product's illegality here is challenged by some.

Toronto criminal defence lawyer Alan Young told the *Toronto Star* that the federal gov-

ernment is relying on a "vague and broad" definition to outlaw the chemical.

"It's not a slam dunk as Health Canada says," he said. "You're just skating on thin ice." Young said Health Canada is simply assuming it's captured under the CDSA.

"Just because a substance is not listed specifically... does not mean that it is not controlled," countered Health Canada spokesperson Sara Lauer. "Health Canada determines whether a substance that is not listed in the CDSA is captured under one of such terms."

John Huffman, who created JWH-018 (a synthetic cannabinoid) in the early 1990s for research at Clemson University, told the *Star* earlier this year that it's not for human consumption.

"It is nasty stuff," he said from South Carolina. "It's dangerous."

Huffman said it interacts with the body in a different way than THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, making it capable of causing psychosis, heart attacks and seizures.

"Some people it doesn't affect, others go crazy," he said.

Adam Wookey guarantees IZMS is legal.

Wookey, 28, was behind PurePillz, advertised as a legal alternative to Ecstasy in the late 2000s; its main ingredient, BZP, was also not listed under the CDSA and he "legally" sold the pills for three years.

"I'd be happy to sit in court," Wookey told the *Star* in February. "I know what I'm doing, it's totally lawful."

Wookey defends the track record of JWH-018 using "comparative risk." Drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes kills, so smoking his product isn't that unsafe, he said.

"What I'm trying to do now is disempower what I was empowering," he said. "That was not right — we know that drugs are going to be purchased so they should be sold in a responsible way."

— with files from Alex Consiglio, the *Toronto Star*

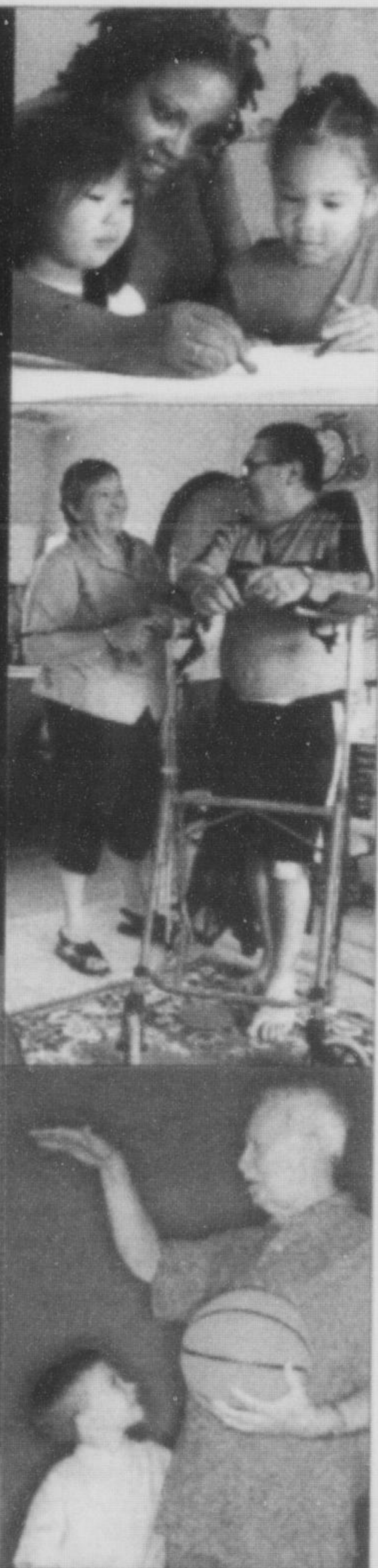


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