

Video aims to curb distracted driving

Incidents of the provincial offence have skyrocketed despite fine increase

By Tim Whitnell
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The potential deadly impact of distracted driving isn't getting through to many motorists, but that hasn't stopped Halton police from trying to get the message across in different ways.

Police, in conjunction with several community partners, have produced a short video that attempts to hammer home the possible dire consequences of driving while distracted.

The two-minute video, which depicts a mock crash caused by a texting driver in which two people were killed, was launched at Georgetown District High School earlier this month.

It was made by Halton police in partnership with TVCogeco, Safe Communities Halton Hills and radio station Z103.5.

The short film was produced in November 2013 on a road in Georgetown.

It involved the efforts of six Georgetown DHS drama and cosmetology students.

Also appearing were Halton police officers and paramedics and Halton Hills firefighters.

Police say enforcement blitzes and messages to the public through media haven't stemmed the tide of people being stopped and ticketed in Halton for distracted driving.

In fact, local figures for the provincial offence have skyrocketed despite a recent increase in the fine for distracted driving and current talk of increasing that fine and possibly adding three driver's licence demerit points.

The fine amount for distracted driving increased to \$280 from \$155 in March.

"Since the inception of the distracted driving law in 2009, the use of cellphones and telecommunication devices is rampant," said Halton police media relations officer Sgt. Chantal Corner.

In 2013, Halton police issued 4,905 provincial offence notices for distracted driving.

In the first quarter of 2014 (January to March), 2,155 distracted driving charges were laid by Halton police, compared to 895 during the same period last year — a whopping 140

per cent increase.

"It is not so much the people who talk on the phone, it is the texting as drivers keep the phone in their lap to keep it hidden, which means their eyes are off the road," said Corner.

"One look at a text message takes

However, Corner said Halton police will continue to conduct more enforcement of the issue.

"Drivers are still not getting it. It is a habit that people can't or won't break... perhaps until it's too late. A tough lesson to learn... as the video so greatly depicts," she said of the

Crime prevention campaign wins award

By David Lea
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A crime prevention campaign featuring decomposing members of the undead succeeded in snaring the Award of Merit for Community Relations for the Halton Regional Police Service earlier this month.

The honour was presented April 9

their doors and removing valuables for their vehicles to prevent theft.

The two-minute video shows a pair of the walking dead advancing on an unsuspecting gardener, but instead of devouring her, they enter her unlocked home, steal a purse, laptop and, ultimately, her vehicle.

One of numerous campaign posters shows desperate residents trying to keep a horde of zombies out of their home with the caption, 'Honey, we really gotta start locking our doors.' Another poster shows one gory cadaver who's clearly frustrated by a locked car door.

The campaign apparently caught the public's attention with police reporting a 40 per cent decrease in residential break-ins and a 16 per cent drop in thefts from vehicles in the three weeks following the start of the campaign.

News about the award was well received by Halton Police Chief Stephen Tanner.

"We are proud to share this award with the Halton community as we did not win this award on our own," he said.

"The common thread woven through our organization of 'One Vision, One Mission, One Team' includes our members, our volunteers, our partners and our communities, working together on crime prevention to help keep our region the safest place to live in Canada."

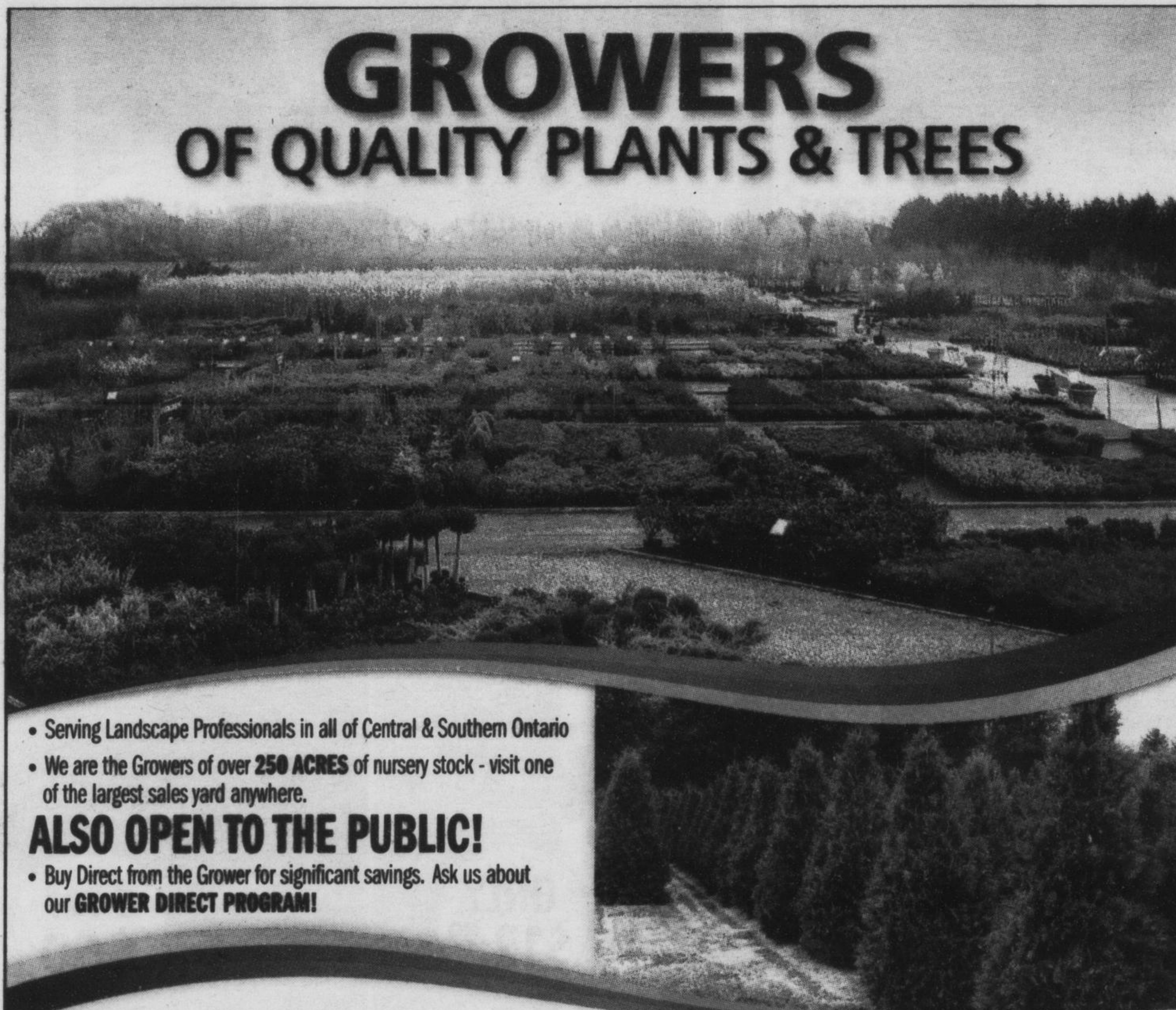
The campaign, which was launched to coincide with Halloween on October 31, 2013, saw the Halton police zombie video posted to YouTube, sent to four movie theatres for viewing on 39 movie screens, uploaded to the Halton police website, shared through social media and played on ScreenScape monitors in all Halton police stations for public viewing.

A total of 500 zombie posters were also distributed across Halton.

The video and posters were made by members of the Halton Regional Police Service and their families and shot in Burlington.

The award singled out Staff Sgt. Troy Izlakar, Const. Laurel Barnett, Const. Noel Bowes, Const. Rob Partridge, Const. Carla Draper, Const. Mike Dinsmore, retired Superintendent Signy Pittman, zombie actress Ashley Izlakar, makeup artist Marina Snider, and Bradley Taylor, Dana Barnett and Janice Coffin of Halton Police Corporate Communications. The CPRS is a national society whose members practice public relations in Canada and abroad.


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a driver's eyes off the road for five seconds — a long time, especially when one is travelling at high speeds."

Milton/Halton Hills police Superintendent Chris Perkins said approximately 2,450 traffic accidents occurred in the region in January and February of this year, with one-quarter of them rear-end collisions. He said that indicates a degree of distraction by a large number of drivers.

"We as a police organization are continually striving to educate rather than enforce," said Perkins.

recently-produced public service announcement (PSA) video.

On April 7, the distracted driving video began to air on TVCogeco throughout Halton, leading up to Canada Road Safety Week (May 13 to 19).

It's also one of the PSAs playing on monitors in the lobby of Halton's police stations.

The video can be viewed at <http://goo.gl/0oYfml> and will be uploaded to YouTube and the Halton police website.

— with files from Lisa Tallyn, Georgetown Independent Free Press

during the 23rd Annual Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) Hamilton Pinnacle Awards ceremony, which were held at the Ron Joyce Centre on McMaster University's DeGroote School of Business campus in Burlington.

The winning campaign utilized the current popularity of zombies to draw attention to crimes taking place in the community, which could be prevented with some simple awareness.

Police used posters and a video and called on residents not to be zombies when it comes to things like locking