

## **Hamilton Police Service Breakout Group – Sept. 19, 2011**

Dan Kinsella, the new superintendent for Division 1, attended our AGM. Also in attendance was our crime manager, Sergeant Sabrina Fesser, and Police Constable Claus Wagner from the traffic department.

Both sessions began with PC Wagner's presentation about traffic matters. A special unit has been created within the HPS called the centralized breath office. It consists of seven officers who have been specially trained to administer breathalyzers. Now a patrol officer can bring the suspect into Central Station for a member of this unit to administer the test, freeing the patrol officer to return to the community. This has decreased the time involved for patrol officers from almost four hours to two hours or less. In the first year, the numbers brought in for impaired driving increased from 283 to 470. It is good to note that overall the numbers of people committing drinking and driving offences has decreased thanks to education and groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

These seven officers also have special training to detect drug offences, which is considerably harder. Drug offences may include abuse of prescription drugs as well as illegal substances. Officers observe body language, "walking the line," finger on nose, impaired speech, dilated eyes, etc.

With the increase of students in our area there has been an increase of bicycle riders, and safety has become an even greater concern: cyclists failing to stop or even slow down for stop signs, riding the wrong way on one-way streets, riding on sidewalks, and using motorized scooters and e-bikes [regular bikes with small electric motors; riders must be 16 and wear a helmet but require no training or licence even though some e-bikes can go 30-40 km/h]. In most cases bicycle riders fall under the same legislation as drivers of motorized vehicles and can receive a ticket. The police are working with the university to educate their students as well as the public.

It was also noted that there is an increase in foot traffic. Pedestrians do not always stop at stop signs and look both ways, do not check for turning cars before crossing the street when the lights turn green, and often are listening to iPods, chatting, or texting.

During the question and answer period, audience members expressed a major concern regarding communication between the police dispatch office and those calling to report a problem. Similar comments have been made at AGM's in the past. Supt. Kinsella and Sgt. Fesser asked people who raised the issue at this session to follow up with them directly so that they could investigate further.

Noise and property damage continue to plague parts of our area. Some of those in attendance said they have had extensive damage done to their property as well as their vehicles. They complained about loud parties and mobile noise. They talked about inconsistency in police coverage of the area: one night there is a strong police presence in their area, and then the following night there appears to be no coverage at all. Sgt. Fesser said that she was out every night the first week of September, and there were also plainclothes officers in the area.

As your police liaison, I was also out in the area every night for the first week of September, and I am also out in the area almost every night walking my dog. I think, however, that the police are trying very hard to curb these behavioral issues. They are certainly doing a much better job co-ordinating with the municipal bylaw officers and are bringing all possible resources to the area, like the ACTION team and the mounted unit.

Before the start of every school year, the crime manager puts together an operational plan for September. It is my belief that we can improve this process with more communication prior to September in order to solicit greater input from the board and the community before the school year.

This summer I was informed that the police are encouraging new representation on the Superintendent's Advisory Committee. Therefore the AWWCA board will be appointing a new representative as police liaison. Facilitating these breakout sessions was my last responsibility in this role. It has been an honour serving our members in this position, and it has been very educational to me. I hope that you have noticed some improvements. The board will let you know who will be taking over as police liaison. I continue on the board as first vice-president and will be available for questions and feedback. I would like to thank former Supt. Bill Stewart and congratulate him on his new position and offer our support to Supt. Kinsella; we look forward to his leadership.

I also would like to thank board member Shelli Eisenberg for taking excellent notes at both sessions.

Ira Rosen  
AWWCA First Vice-President