

LOCAL

Second man arrested in statue theft

OAKVILLE ♦ A second man has been arrested in the theft of the five-metre bronze statue of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko.

Police said the man was stopped on a traffic violation and subsequently arrested by investigating officers.

The statue was taken from the Taras H. Shevchenko Memorial Park in north Oakville sometime between Dec. 15 and Dec. 31. The head of the figure later turned up at a Burlington recycler. No other parts of the statue, estimated to cost \$350,000 to replace, have been recovered.

"We believe that the bulk of it was cut up and sent overseas," said Halton Detective Sergeant Greg Sullivan.

A building boom in China has created a high demand for metals such as bronze and copper, he said. Sending the materials overseas and melting them there is cheaper than doing it here.

A 36-year-old Oakville man faces one count of possession of stolen property over \$5,000 and two counts of breach of probation. He will appear in a Milton court Feb. 13.

The Hamilton Spectator

Quick-change scam artist arrested

This time, his poker face didn't work.

The main player in a quick-change scam that victimized stores throughout Ontario last year was finally tracked down and arrested by Halton police last week.

According to Halton Detective Robert Lloyd, the suspect would enter a business and purchase something small with a \$50 bill. Once the item was purchased, he would take several more large bills from his wallet and request change.

"He would say that he had won a poker game, or was going to play poker," said Lloyd yesterday.

At this point, the man would begin changing his mind concerning which bills he wanted changed. He would do it enough times that the employee would become confused about whose money was whose. At this point, another man would help the suspect, distracting the other employees or customers in line.

Christian David Tygesen, 39, of Hamilton is charged with four counts of theft under \$5,000 and four counts of fraud under \$5,000.

The Hamilton Spectator

Oakville man gets bail in fraud case

TORONTO ♦ The man who spent his birthday in jail on charges of stealing \$8.4 million from Canadian investors in a money-making scheme was granted bail yesterday.

Adam Spencer, 26, turned himself in to Toronto police after being wanted on a Canada-wide warrant that was issued on Jan. 11.

His parents put up \$500,000 for his release and he must live under their supervision while on bail.

Spencer, an Oakville native, sold shares of his company Emexis Integrated Solutions, a consulting company, to investors in fall 2005.

Police allege that investors bought shares in his company at 50 cents each with the option to purchase an equal number of shares at 75 cents when he took the company public.

He changed his mind and told his investors he would compensate them by buying all their shares for \$1 apiece. But he then disappeared with all of the invested funds, police say.

Spencer will appear next in court on March 1. He has also to appear before a Superior Court judge on a civil warrant.

— Spectator wire services



KAZ NOVAK, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion and Burlington's Liberal MPP candidate Joan Lougheed, second from right, answer questions from reporters yesterday.

Parents get hotline for kids mental problems

BY JOANNA FRKETICH

Parents desperate for help with their kids' behavioural and anxiety problems may soon be able to bypass long wait lists and get advice over the phone.

McMaster University is getting \$4 million to test a program that makes a coach available by phone immediately after parents seek help.

They also get written materials and videos instructing them how to manage their child's mental health issues.

The coach checks in weekly to answer questions and see how they're doing.

"Waiting lists for children's mental health are often too long," said Dr. Charles Cunningham, who is leading the research team.

We are under the gun and there are kids lined up everywhere
Alex Thomson

"Families seek help when the problem is getting difficult to deal with. If we can deal with it quickly, it's more effective. The longer they wait, the more discouraged they get and the problem gets more complex and difficult to deal with."

The program has been used in Nova Scotia for the last eight years, and numerous studies have found it to be effective.

Dalhousie University is partnering with McMaster to expand it to Ontario and try out new variations of the program over the next five years funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

"It really enables people to access care easily," said Dr. Rod Evans, medical director of the child and youth mental health program at McMaster Children's Hospital.

"Some children require extensive individual help, but in some instances the best way to manage is to work with the parent rather than the child, using education rather than therapy. Learning in the office is no better than learning on the telephone."

In fact, for some parents, the phone is better because hospital visits require time off work during office hours, transportation to get there, expensive parking fees and babysitting for other children.

But some parents question whether this program is really what they need.

"It's trying to put a Band-Aid on it," said Ashley Ross, who has struggled to help her nine-year-old son with his mental health problems for the last four years.

She feels there's already enough resources dedicated to helping her manage his behavioural problems. What she needs is treatment for him to address the root problem and help him lead a normal life.

But with only one increase to children's mental health budgets in the last 15 years in Ontario, that treatment is hard to get and waiting lists can be up to a year long.

"We're under the gun and there are kids lined up everywhere," said Alex Thomson, executive director of Lynwood Hall Child and Family Centre.

"Our costs all go up, so with no increase, you cut services, you cut staff and cut the hearts out of the organizations."

"We're 10 to 15 years behind!"
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Dion spotlights Great Lakes

Liberal leader says Tory environment plan too little, too late

BY WADE HEMSWORTH

BURLINGTON ♦ Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion has identified pollution of the Great Lakes as a critical issue confronting Canadians.

After emerging from a meeting with local environmentalists yesterday, Dion said he wants to help the lakes by removing dangerous, persistent chemicals from the marketplace and replacing them with safer alternatives.

Dion met privately for close to an hour with a group that included representatives of Burlington city council, the Bay Area Restoration Committee, Burlington's sustainable development committee and Conservation Halton.

They talked about broad issues of water, air, industry, and education before Dion addressed reporters in a brief scrum at Burlington's Spencer Smith Park by the edge of Lake Ontario.

In their last fiscal update of a few weeks ago, (there was) not a word about the environment. Now they feel the heat. They understand where the Canadian people are
Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion

Dion is making a series of election-style stops in southern Ontario this week, as the environment emerges as a defining issue of the next federal election.

The Liberal leader castigated the Harper government's recent announcements on the environment as too little, too late to buy much credibility with Canadians who consider it a top priority.

"In their last fiscal update of a few weeks ago, (there was) not a word about the environment," Dion said.

"Now they feel the heat. They

understand where the Canadian people are."

Having a chance to quiz the new leader of the Opposition also gave reporters the chance to canvass his opinion on several subjects of particular interest to southern Ontarians.

Dion indicated that he favours the revitalization of Canada's rail and other public transit systems, a practical working partnership with the provinces, and the creation of an independent body to resolve native land claims such as the one at the heart of the nearly 11-month conflict in

Caledonia.

Dion's strategic Burlington stop — arranged just one day earlier — put him in the riding of former Liberal MP Paddy Torsney.

She lost a close fight to Conservative Mike Wallace last year, becoming a casualty of the anti-Liberal backlash.

Torsney went on to serve as Ontario co-chair of Dion's leadership campaign, helping him to defeat heavyweights Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff.

Yesterday's stop also generated some party profile for the coming provincial byelection in Burlington, where Joan Lougheed is running for the Liberals in the race to take the seat vacated by Cam Jackson when he became mayor of Burlington in November.

Lougheed hosted the round-table meeting and described Dion as warm, inclusive and good-natured.

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Convicted teacher still holds licence

Man who had sex with students won't necessarily be fired, or barred from teaching in the future

BY CARMELA FRAGOMENI

A former Waterford teacher found guilty of sexual assault still has his teaching licence and is "in good standing" with the Ontario College of Teachers, the profession's self-regulating body.

Kristian Coulombe, 33, was convicted Dec. 21 of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of five female students.

Coulombe is free on bail and will be sentenced in a Simcoe courtroom Feb. 7. He is expected to face imprisonment.

The convictions were for sexual acts from 1999 to 2003 that included oral

sex, intercourse with a 14-year-old, and a sexual threesome with two of the girls at his home on a school day.

The criminal convictions do not mean he'll automatically lose his teaching licence, according to the College of Teachers. Nor do they mean the college will automatically investigate.

College spokesman Brian Jamieson said the criminal case and a college investigation on allegations of professional misconduct are two different processes.

"We're aware of the (criminal) case ... It's not that we're not influenced by it ... (but) one doesn't automatically trigger the other."

Coulombe, a teacher since 1998, is on an unpaid leave from Grand Erie District School Board. He was teaching in Brantford when he was arrested and charged in 2003.

A trustees' committee will decide on Monday whether Coulombe will be fired.

A CTV news Whistleblower report in November found that sometimes, teachers who sexually abuse students are not barred forever from teaching.

It cited the case of Brockville high school teacher Rodney Palmer, convicted of sexual exploitation in 1990 and sentenced to 15 months in jail. His teaching licence was revoked, but in

2003, the college gave it back to him. Palmer was found teaching at a private Brockville boarding school.

The Ontario College of Teachers' disciplinary decisions are public and are listed on its website at www.oct.ca under Investigations & Hearings.

But if someone applies to have his or her licence reinstated, those hearings are closed to the public and the decisions are kept confidential.

However, Jamieson said any application to reinstate a licence is treated like a new licence application, which requires a criminal-background check.

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