

# Debit, credit card scams at work over long weekends

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
*The Champion*

Despite its continued small town feel, Milton isn't exempt from big town issues. Case in point — debit and credit card scams.

With the Canada Day weekend behind us and another holiday approaching August 2, it's important to know no one is immune to what Halton police are saying is becoming an increasingly large problem.

"It's become the norm as opposed to the exception," said Halton Regional Police Acting Det. Sgt. Alex Fishbein.

Long weekends are when fraud incidents seem to flare. While declining to give any numbers, Acting Det. Sgt. Fishbein said there were more credit and debit card fraud incidents that occurred in Milton over the Canada Day weekend than on a normal summer weekend.

"It's not a rash (of frauds). It's typical activity for a long weekend," he said.

He wouldn't comment on the locations where the frauds took place, but said more than one location was pinpointed. At least one of the locations is a gas station, he said, adding he doesn't want to name names for fear of hurting their business.

"In the past, they (fraudsters)

**"It's become the norm as opposed to the exception."**

**ACTING DET. SGT. ALEX FISHBEIN**

would obtain (credit or debit card) information quickly, and use the cards. Now, they're gathering the information and waiting for a long weekend," he said.

That way, they have an extra day to spend, since many people are away on vacation and most likely won't notice unusual activity on their cards until they return, he said.

Banks have computer software that tracks unusual activity on customers' cards, he said.

But on long weekends it's harder to detect what's out of the norm, since many people spend more money than usual, or go on trips where they spend large sums of money.

There are several methods of debit and credit card scams.

One of the most popular is called skimming. Using the example of a gas station where direct payment is used at the pump, Acting Det. Sgt. Fishbein said a fraudster sets up

hidden equipment so when the debit or credit card is swiped, information is captured from the card's magnetic strip.

A pin-hole camera is used to get the customer's PIN number.

The information from the card can be duplicated on any magnetic strip, and realistic-looking cards can be cloned, he said.

In other cases, bank machines are set up with false fronts that copy the information off the cards once they're inserted.

Acting Det. Sgt. Fishbein said he doesn't know which methods were used for the Canada Day weekend incidents.

Unfortunately, there isn't much regular folk can do to prevent these crimes.

"Ultimately, if you use machines, there's nothing you can do about it. When you swipe, there's no way to know if a pinhole camera is attached or a system is in place to capture (your information)."

Fortunately, the banks cover the losses, Acting Det. Sgt. Fishbein said.

"It's just an inconvenience you get stuck with."

He said most scams now involve organized crime. "It's no longer one or two people."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at [sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com](mailto:sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com).

## Jail guard in court

A correctional officer accused of providing contraband to female inmates for sexual favours will appear in Burlington court August 3 to set a date for trial.

The date was set Wednesday when the accused appeared at Ontario Court of Justice in Burlington.

Halton Regional Police charged the adult male employee of Milton's Vanier Institute for Women with four counts of breach of trust and three counts of sexual assault in March.

His name is being withheld to protect the safety of the victims, police said.

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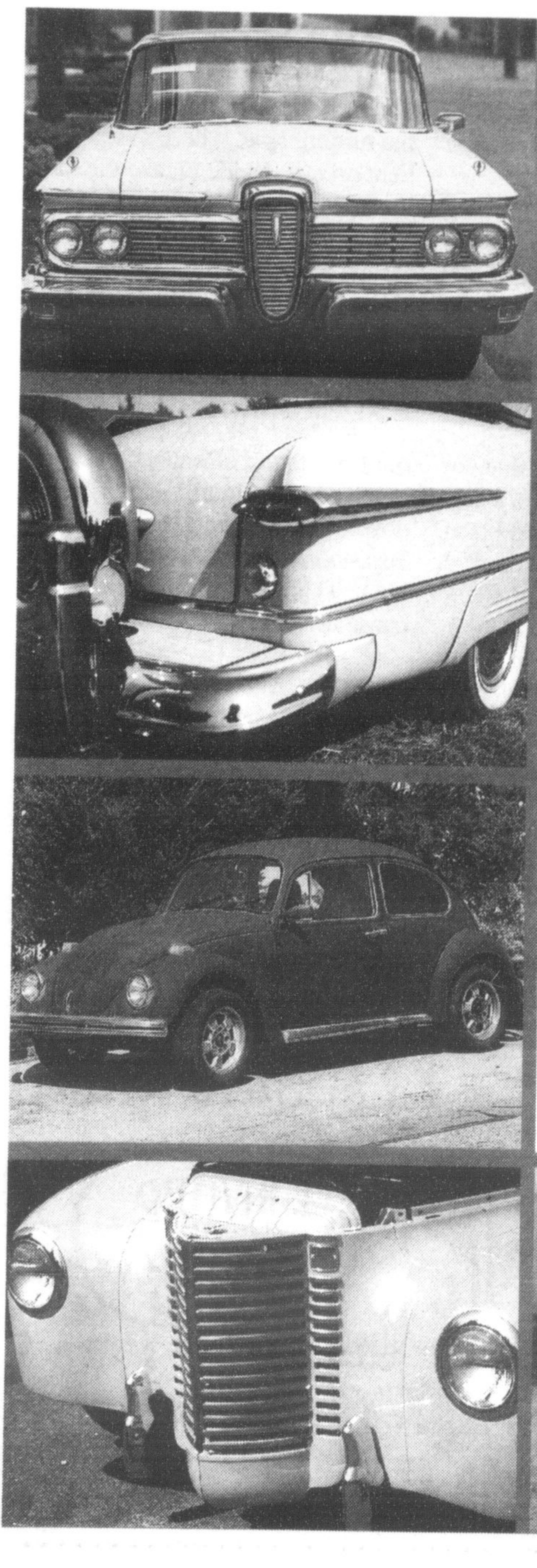
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