

Taking steps to combat growing graffiti problem



Above, graffiti covers the new pedestrian bridge at Rotary Park. At left, det. const. John Pepler speaks about the growing problem.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

Parents' help needed: cops

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Graffiti is a "growing epidemic" in Milton that local authorities are working hard to eradicate.

And according to Halton Region Police, it's something that vigilant parents of youths can also help put an end to.

These were among the messages delivered by Det. Const. John Pepler last week at a meeting of the Milton Community Policing Committee (MCPC) that focused on the graffiti problem that's been picking up pace in Milton over the past several months.

Pepler said police have identified about five to six organized graffiti groups in Milton, with members ranging in age

from 13 to 22.

"There are areas of town they've claimed as their turf," he said. "The graffiti is their identity."

He said police aren't classifying these groups as gangs, but rather groups that are following gang influences they see in the media.

The groups have all given themselves names and created 'tags,' or a distinguishable signature.

"We try to deface that tag to take away the identity of that person," said Pepler.

Tagging is the primary concern for police right now as there haven't been many instances of hateful, racist graffiti.

Pepler said there was one recent occurrence where a youth did a bunch of tags and also put swastikas with them.

"In interviewing the person who did it, he didn't even

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Police charge trio in robbery spree

Three men have been charged in connection with dozens of recent armed robberies across the GTA, including two in Campbellville and one in Milton.

As a result of a joint investigation — following several Halton-area robberies throughout January and many more in nearby municipalities — two Brampton suspects and a third from Vaughan, all in their mid-twenties, face more than 200 charges overall and 31 related to the robberies in Halton.

Among the latter are a combined 14 counts of robbery with a firearm and one count of uttering a death threat.

The local robberies all occurred on January 31. Both the Martin Street Esso gas station and Sunoco gas station in Campbellville were robbed, while a patron of the Mohawk Slots was car-jacked.

The three men were arrested by York Regional Police after a police pursuit following a robbery at an Esso gas station in Vaughan February 19.

The suspects are scheduled to appear in Ontario Court of Justice in Newmarket today.



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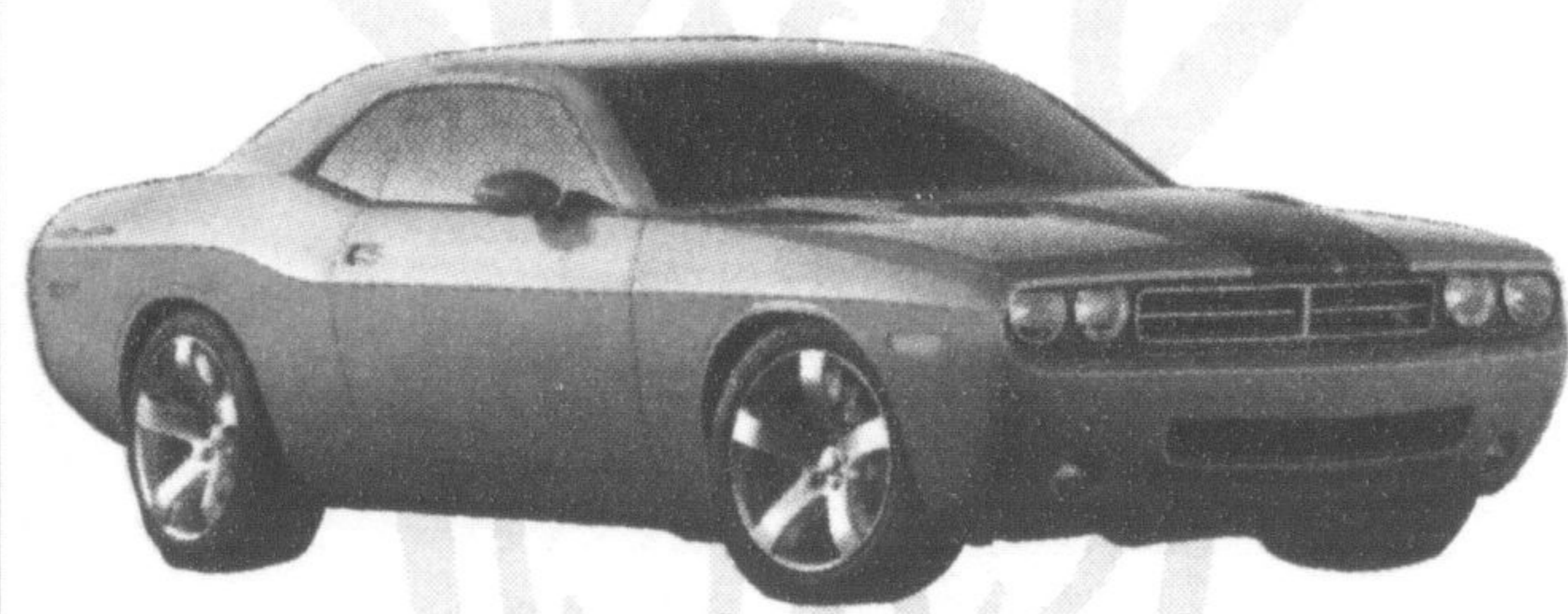
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