

973 certificates issued in York this year

Gun group opposes tougher permit laws

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

Ten dollars will buy you the right to own a gun. That's the cost of applying for a permit to purchase a firearm, but the fee could be raised to \$50 if proposed changes to gun control laws are passed later this year.

Other possible amendments include a 28-day waiting period, photograph ID on the licence, the names of two references who have known the applicant for three years, competence training and parental consent for 16 and 17-year olds.

National Firearms Association President David Tomlinson said stiffer permit regulations will do nothing to cut down on crime involving guns. "The only person you're disarming is someone who abides by the law."

He said in the United States, where permits are issued according to state or city legislation as opposed to Canada where firearms regulations are federally controlled, the tighter the laws, the worse the crime. New York and Washington, two states with high violent crime rates, have the tightest controls while the loosest regulations exist in Vermont.

Tomlinson compared passing stricter gun control laws to warding off coyotes from a herd of sheep. "They pass laws saying no one is allowed to have big teeth. Then they pull teeth from the sheepdogs. When the coyotes descend on the herd, there's no protection. The only one's with teeth are the coyotes."

Tomlinson said one answer to curbing misuse of firearms is to institute a screening system. "Make people prove they can use a gun for the purpose it is intended."

Currently, a person can get a gun ownership permit and buy a gun without ever firing a shot.

In York Region, firearms acquisition certificate applications are available at all police stations and are then sent to Const. Rick Howie at the Richmond Hill station.

Three to four weeks after handing in the form, the applicant visits Howie who in the meantime has run the prospective gun owner's name through the police computer system, and chances are, if the applicant has no history of violent behavior, he or she will be granted a gun ownership permit.

"99.9 per cent of the people who come through this office are legitimate, bona fide collectors," said Howie, who has held the position of firearms officer since April.

In the first six months of this year, 973 firearms acquisition certificates were issued. Of these, 243 were issued to collectors, 104 to collectors, 10 for business purposes and nine to security people.

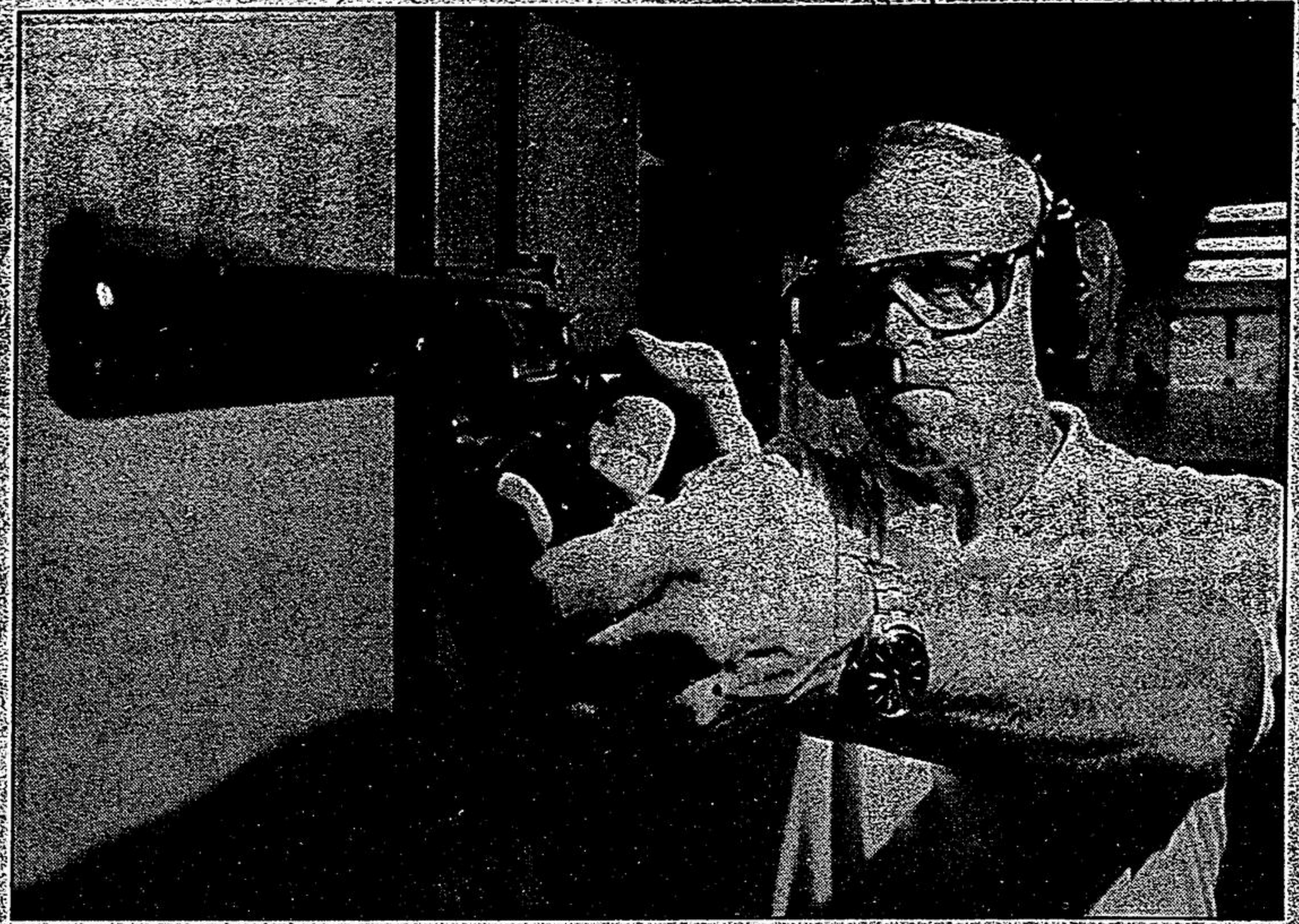
Howie interviews each applicant personally, but Tomlinson said the "only meaningful screening place" is on a supervised shooting range, adding any laws requiring a person to prove their proficiency are impossible to enforce.

His association is researching the legal aspects of firearms control and "has evidence" that the proposed changes are unconstitutional, he said from the association's Edmonton headquarters.

Howie estimated half the applicants in York Region are gun collectors and target shooters while half are hunters.

If a person admits the gun is for personal safety, the request will be turned down. "We will not issue a gun for protection," Howie said.

Tomlinson said this rule, in particular, turns the gun control into a women's issue. "You're turned down due to a policy decision by a bureaucracy run 95 per cent by men."



Photo/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Bruce Gledhill of the Trillium Sport Shooting Complex in Gormley takes aim at a target. The range will hold its official opening in September, but already has about 600 members.

Proper instruction crucial to firearm safety, says shooting club manager

Learning to shoot is the key to firearms safety, said a local firearms instructor.

"Anybody wanting to own a firearm should have instruction on a firearm," Trillium Sport Shooting Complex manager Bruce Gledhill said.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville gun range opened last January in Gormley and has signed up more than 600 people. Target shooters, security workers and police personnel have joined the recreational shooting range that can house up to 1,200 members.

At the grand opening of the range, slated for September, the club will offer two 10-position ranges with individually controlled target systems, a classroom and a club room. Trillium Sports is also handicap accessible.

Before joining the club, the prospective member must have a firearms acquisition certificate. To apply for a carrying certificate, allowing the gun owner to transport the weapon from home to the range, the gun owner must take a one-day safety course as well as a six-week probationary period with supervised shooting.

"I come across a lot of people who shouldn't be associated with firearms," said Gledhill, who worked 22

years with Brinks Canada. He spent 11 of those years as a firearms instructor.

Gledhill said it's too easy for someone to obtain a firearms acquisition certificate from the police, buy a gun and ammunition and learn to use the weapon at home.

After successfully completing the probation period, which Gledhill said should be longer, the person is given a letter stating he or she is a member of the club and can now apply to the police for a carrying permit.

With 11 years experience guarding Brinks trucks, Gledhill learned the importance of decision-making and using common sense when carrying a gun.

Gledhill pulled his gun only once in his career when he arrived at the scene of a bank robbery in progress and saw an armed man at the entrance of the bank. He drew his gun but did not shoot. The hesitation was the right choice, the armed man was undercover police officer.

"The last thing you want to do to defend your life is use a gun," he said. "In an armed confrontation there's never two winners. There's a winner and a loser."

—Julie Caspersen

Volunteers make difference at recycling depot

ROGER BELGRAVE
Staff Reporter

Stouffville Recycling Depot has been accepting local recyclables for over a decade and even with the blue box program, still receives a good portion of the town's recyclable goods.

Since 1976, volunteers have been laboring at the depot to divert waste from local dumpsites.

Glass, tin, newsprint and corrugated box board were accepted at the depot long before the blue box program was started.

Now the depot only helps to complement the town's growing recycling program.

In fact, time has done little to

diminish the amount of material faithfully brought to the depot each week.

"We are finding more and more people coming by," said Cam Wallis, president of the Recycling Group, which runs the depot.

With the arrival of blue boxes in 1988, there was a slight drop in some of the materials collected at the depot. But the depot still sees some heavy traffic when it's open Thursday and Saturday mornings, Wallis said.

In 1986, the depot collected about 183 tonnes of metal, glass, newsprint and corrugated boxes.

In 1989, after introduction of the blue box program, tonnage

fell slightly. That year, the Recycling Group collected about 163 tonnes of recyclable material.

"It (the depot) is one of the better kept secrets in town," said Wallis.

Located just south of the town hall, the depot still helps to serve some households on the other side of Stouffville and areas recycling trucks simply cannot access.

Wallis estimated about half of the people who use the depot have been doing so for the last 15 years.

Currently, the depot still accepts glass, tin and newsprint. But there are plans to widen the range of materials accepted.

The facility operates relatively inexpensively.

The town has donated the building for storing the recyclables. Miller Waste isn't currently charging to dispose of the material and the depot itself is operated by some 60 volunteers.

"Basically there's not much overhead so it doesn't require much funding," Wallis said.

Wallis moved to Stouffville in 1985 and soon after arriving

Group. Shortly after volunteering to help, he became president.

The Group has been very active in promoting the 3 R's in Stouffville, helping to organize such events as Hazardous Waste Day and a recent composting workshop.

Members of the group are determined to make recycling an intricate part of community life.

"We try to create an awareness and get things done in the community," said Wallis.

Man charged with sexually assaulting 10-year-old girl at Musselman's Lake

A man was arrested after a girl reported being sexually assaulted and videotaped at a Whitchurch-Stouffville trailer park over the weekend.

Police reports said a 10-year-old Toronto girl was invited into the trailer of a man at Cedar Beach Park on Musselman's Lake last Saturday. The girl was touched and fondled while in the trailer and the assault was recorded on video.

Police said the accused was known to the victim and they were neighbors at the park.

A 65-year-old Rexdale man of Provence Trail was arrested by York Regional Police Sunday and charged with sexual assault, invitation to sexual touching and two counts of sexual interference.

The victim was taken to the Hospital For Sick Children.

"We seized a large quantity of tapes and are viewing them now to see what they contain," police spokesperson Sgt. Norm Miles said.

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