

Police chief supports tougher youth laws

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Staff Reporter

A retiree association demanding stiffer punishment for repeat youth

offenders to protect seniors has the support of the York Region police chief.

The Ontario section of the Canadian Council for

Retirees called for all people convicted of a crime to be identified, and youths between 12 and 17 years to be tried in adult court.

The council feels it has the support of the majority of Ontario residents in its campaign to toughen the Young Offenders Act.

Since June 1992, members collected more than 21,000 signatures across the province from people wanting repeat youth criminals to receive harsher treatment in court.

The petitions were hand-

ed to Solicitor General Doug Lewis in Markham recently in a meeting arranged by Markham Whitchurch-Stouffville MP Bill Attewell.

"I'm very keen on looking at changes to the act vis-a-vis repeat offenders," Lewis said. "If it was as easy as passing a law, Bill (Attewell) and I would do it tomorrow."

The cooperation of parents, judges, school boards and police is needed before the act is overhauled, he said.

York Regional Police Chief Bryan Cousineau offered his views on how to toughen the act.

"There has to be amendments. Sixteen and 17 year olds should be tried in adult court, period," he said, adding judges then would have the option of leniency for a first offence.

Another change promoted by Cousineau is that judges should have the option of handing longer sentenced to teens under 16 years.

He also asked that the province make it easier for police to obtain the right to publicize names and photos of 16 and 17 year old offenders wanted for serious crimes, and that when this is granted that the timeline be extended from two days to one or two weeks.

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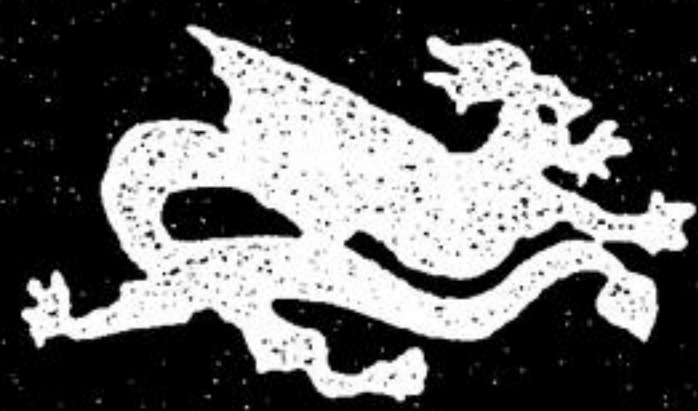
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