

Insight

Police chief 'recycles' York force

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

York's cops were financially handcuffed this year and singing the over-budget blues.

In a growing region where 685 uniformed officers are supposed to police 530,000 people, something had to be done to free up some manpower.

But with a \$60-million budget, and loads of weary ratepayers screaming for economic restraint, the force's top brass had to re-think its strategy.

York Region police chief Bryan Cousineau answered the call. Cousineau, a veteran cop, and rookie chief, came up with a game plan to put more cops on the street without hiring a single new officer for 1993.

Cousineau played the 3R's with his force - a game to 'reduce, re-use and recycle' officers. Cousineau decided to restructure and re-align his force to fit the economic times by "re-assigning duties."

The chief told *The Tribune* during an interview last week

that the force had several exclusive units set up when the economy was booming in the late 80s.

"We had a substantial number of officers serving specialty

units, but now the economy is bad. My decision was to make a move to re-deploy and transfer people to other areas," to better serve the public's need, Cousineau said.

He said the force's 685 uniformed officers and 140 civilian workers were reshuffled - a move that found 16 more officers to parole York's streets. "I needed a way to provide

effective police service, but I knew we were (economically) limited. I decided moving around officers could do that without increasing manpower and without hurting protection to citizens," Cousineau said.

He added the force never asked to have his staff increased this year, but admitted he would need about 30 more officers next year if Queen's Park pushes through a plan - dubbed disentanglement - to swap welfare services for road maintenance with the region.

Cousineau said the 80-plus kilometres of roadways the force would be responsible for, would make it necessary to add about 30 more officers and five new cruisers.

Cousineau said his plan should work well without additional officers because the entire staff is being used to their full potential.

But he said if the workload increases, he will be in an excellent position to hire next year.

"Next time I can say I need more officers, but I want to be everything I can without being a burden to the taxpayer," Cousineau said.

York remains 'safest' to live, work

York Region is the safest place to live across the country and its residents are well protected by the York Region police force, insists chief, Bryan Cousineau.

Cousineau, who has been York's police chief since Nov. 1992, and the deputy chief since 1987, told *The Tribune* that the most updated statistics show York Region has the fewest number of criminal occurrences - pegged at nearly 36,000 in 1992 - than any other region of its size in the province.

The chief said a rash of recent robberies, two in Whitchurch-Stouffville, has worried the public unnecessarily. "York Region is still the safest place to live and to work in Canada," Cousineau maintained. He said an increase in crime, which is unavoidable in a growing region like York, will not deplete just because there are more officers on the street.

"If there were another 100 policemen on the streets, it would not stop the crime," he said. "More officers will not deter crime - what we need is public co-operation. Help us help you," the chief said. Cousineau said York's force, like many other forces, are getting back to the basics in policing. "We're trying a different style of policing now; back on the street. Many officers are now on foot patrol during the day; cruiser patrol at night; which allows more mobility."

And Cousineau said Whitchurch-Stouffville, one of the region's quieter communities for the force, is "well policed. Just because you don't

see an officer doesn't mean there is none around," he said.

"I want to assure residents

that we are doing everything we can to make the streets safe. There is no need for panic."



Crime stat

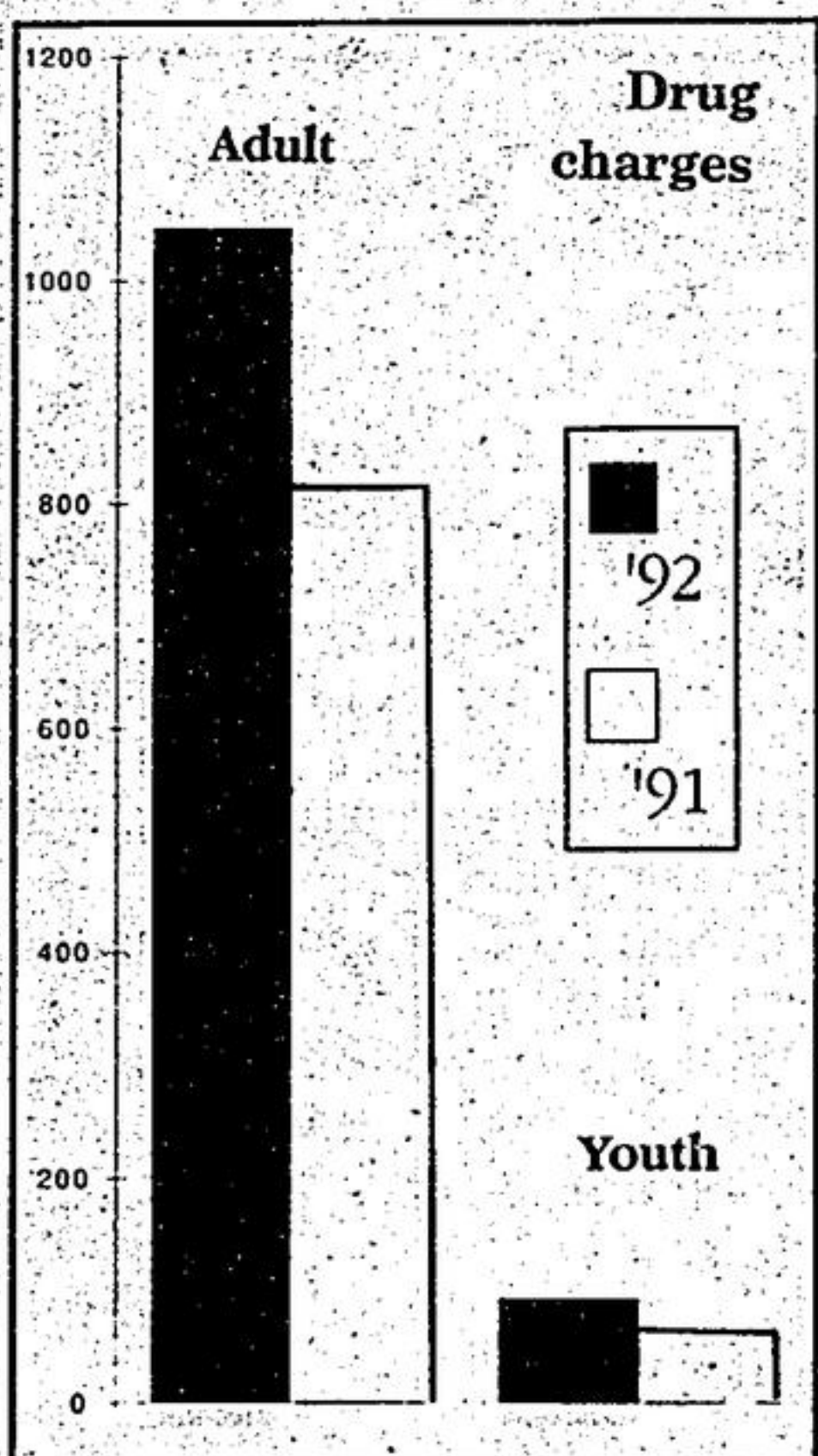
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York Police have laid charges in eight murders of the 10 committed in 1992 in the region. The other two are organized crime-related and are under investigation.

Crime stat

35,806

Police filed reports on 35,806 criminal occurrences in 1992, ranging from bike thefts, phone complaints, to murder.



Police operating costs swell to \$60M

York Region has the 12th largest police department in Canada and remains one of the 12 lowest regional crime centres.

And that's something to be proud of, says York Region's police chief, Bryan Cousineau.

All of that among a rising

number of criminals and a region which is growing faster than any other in the province.

Cousineau maintains the Canadian Centre for Justice statistics show York's 685 uniformed officers are doing their best to combat crime.

It currently operates under a

\$59.1 million budget - after an approved 4.1 per cent increase this year.

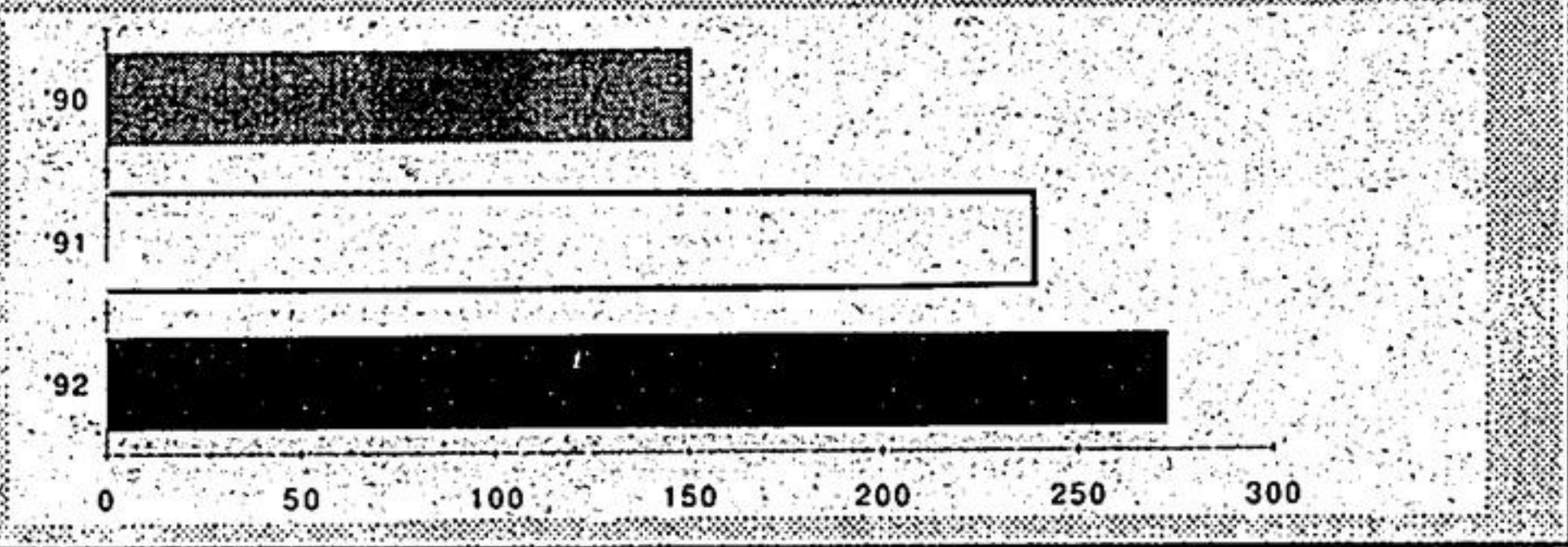
Cousineau said the majority of the increase was necessary to cover a 2.5 per cent pay wage increase which started in '92. An average uniform officer in York Region earns about \$51,000 a year, he said. Payroll eats up about \$37 million of the force's budget, but if the government's disentanglement plans go through, the department will need an additional 30 officers and five cruisers, Cousineau says.

The force currently maintains and operates a fleet of 202 cruisers, vans and other vehicles, costing about \$500,000 a year.

"Most of these vehicles run 24 hours a day," Cousineau says.

ROBBERIES ON THE RISE:

Police stats show robberies have nearly doubled in three years



Store owner bitter after triple robberies

BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

When Glenn Woods opened his Freel Lane Stouffville Triple Play Sports Cards store in 1989, he had no idea he would be the victim of a criminal 'triple play' which would see his shop broken into three times in 18 months.

For Woods - who told *The Tribune* after his most recent robbery last weekend, that he "takes the break-ins personally" - the apparent rise in crime in York Region is a simple matter of apathy and a law which makes it too easy for young offenders to get off the hook.

"These (thieves) knew what they were doing - they knew just where to go," Woods said.

"It's been the same pattern every time, the same time of

night, and the same way of breaking in. But I just can't believe someone living nearby wouldn't have heard the noise and tried to do something. People just don't want to get involved."

Woods, who was out of town when his store was hit last week, said he would normally have heard the alarm from his nearby home and would have been on the scene within minutes.

He felt the robbers, who walked away with \$7,000 in goods, were probably under 18 or just over, left signs of being angry at not having found what they were looking for.

"I don't leave my valuable cards in the store at night."

Woods said he senses a frustration, bordering on a defeatist attitude on the part

of the police when dealing with crimes involving young offenders.

"I don't blame them," he said. "It's the system that's lacking. If the police do anything wrong out of protocol, the case is thrown out of court. And if they do get a conviction, the young offender gets a suspended sentence, or no sentence at all because he's a first-time offender."

Woods, who is moving his store to Stouffville Place Mall this week, said he thinks it's time that people everywhere, including parents of teens, get tuned in to what's going on.

"I hope (the recent rash of robberies) wake people up. I believe in looking out for each other; the old golden rule. And the whole thing just makes me wonder where the parents of

these kids are."

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