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Economist & Sun  
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**POLICE: Student program will work well in close-knit schools such as Stouffville District**

# Crime Stoppers expands to high schools

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
STAFF WRITER

Student Crime Stoppers is coming soon to a school near you.

York Regional Police are hard at work promoting the program in all Markham and Stouffville high schools, giving students an opportunity to keep their schools safe without fear of being labeled a snitch.

A close-knit student body means that many times students who see a crime, or know one has been committed, have no way to get information to police without worrying someone will make them pay for talking. It means the school suffers and the vast majority of law-abiding students suffer as well.

"We make it clear we're not here because there are problems, we're here because every student in every school should know they can stop violence and crime without making themselves targets," Street Beat Const. Vernon Ward said.

The only school with a program now running is Father Michael McGivney Catholic Academy in Markham. Teacher liaison Sam Cuda said he would encourage every school in

the region to get involved.

"It's been a great program for us," he said. "Everyone is concerned someone's watching them so it has acted as a deterrent. If anyone does commit a crime, we make the announcement over the PA asking people to call Student Crime Stoppers. Usually by the end of the day the person who did it comes to speak to me, asking we not let it go to the police."

Const. Tom Korte said among the dozens of schools he and Ward will visit this year are Markham's Middlefield Collegiate, scheduled for next month, and Stouffville District Secondary School.

He said in small communities like Stouffville, a strong Student Crime Stoppers is a real plus for students.

"Stouffville's isolated. There's not much to do and there's not a big police presence there, not even a station," he explained.

"There are things going on that are not being reported, we know that. We believe there are students who are being intimidated; they fear repercussions."

He said Stouffville's school community is smaller and more close-knit than at some of the larger schools, and that makes it more difficult for students to report crime.

## THE NUMBERS

The following statistics show the success of the York Region Crime Stoppers program in 1998:

Reports taken	292
Arrests made	42
Cases cleared	64
Charges laid	87
Property seized	\$78,678
Drugs seized	\$308,130

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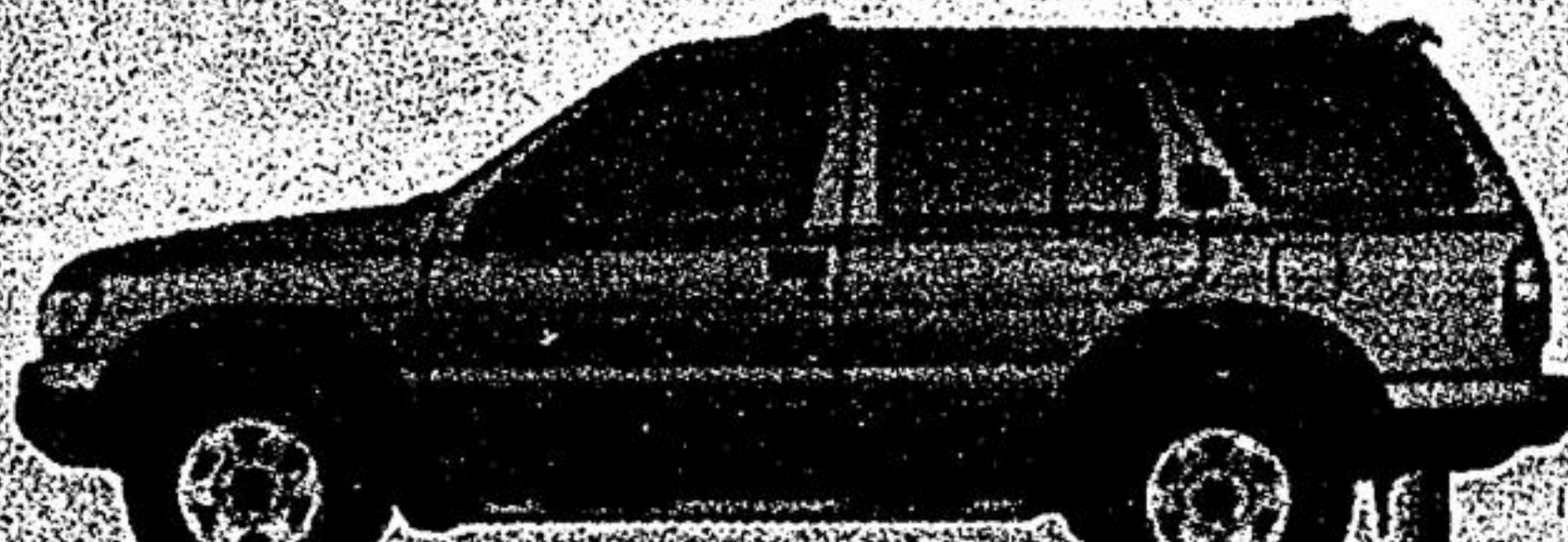


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When a program is up and running, with posters and pamphlets throughout the school, it can have the added benefit of being a deterrent.

"Generally, kids don't look at it as being a responsible citizen the way an adult would. So we tell them this is a great way to be responsible without being a snitch," Korte said.

He added that when a program is up and running, with posters and pamphlets throughout the school, it can have the added benefit of being a deterrent.

January is national Crime Stoppers month, an opportunity to promote the program in the community, generate local support and raise money.

"We're always looking for corporate support. We need money for rewards, for promotion and for advertising," said Const. Kim Killby, head of the York Region program.

Crime Stoppers offers corporations a plaque program, where they make a five-year commitment to donate money and in return receive a plaque they can show off, said Crime Stoppers board chair Juliane McTavish.

"This year we're putting a lot of money into promoting Student Crime Stoppers," McTavish added. "We try to promote the number wherever we can, but even things like putting the number in every Bell phone book across Canada costs a lot."

Killby agreed, saying the more people know about the program, the more likely they are to use it.

"Crime Stoppers allows people to report crime anonymously with no fear of reprisal," she said.

"There's no way anyone can find out who you are. There's no call display, officers taking the call are not allowed to know who it is. In fact, if the tipster identifies himself in some way, he is asked to hang up and call back to a different call-taker. That's how seriously we take it."

Ensuring secrecy means following strict rules and systems.

Callers are given a specific code number when they call with a tip. They are asked to call back in about a month so officers can check the status of the case they reported on. If the call resulted in an arrest — not a conviction, just an arrest — they get a cash reward.

"The amount depends on the nature of the crime," Killby said. "Property or drug cases average about \$400. Homicides or sex assaults would be the top award of \$1,000."

Tipsters then take their code number to any branch of the Toronto Dominion bank to collect the reward.

But Killby pointed out the program depends on the community, which is why awareness is so important.

"The community should always get involved. You never know when crime can affect you or somebody you love. You have a moral obligation and how can you not when no one's ever going to find out who you are? And you get money for doing it."

Crime Stoppers phone number is 222-TIPS.