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 Brampton in OMHA
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SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 1999

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No more pardons for sex offenders

Police chief demands files be opened

BY RICK VANDERLINDE
 STAFF WRITER

York Regional Police Chief Julian Fantino called for an end to pardons for convicted child molesters during a trip to Ottawa Thursday.

Fantino told the House Justice Committee full pardons for child abusers continue to put children at risk.

In a telephone interview from his Woodbridge home, Fantino said the pardons make it impossible to warn organizations such as Big Brothers, Boy Scouts and the YMCA that a convicted pedophile may be applying as a volunteer.

Those organizations request volunteers to get a police clearance check before they are allowed to work with children.

"A significant amount of sex offenders re-offend, and once a pardon has been granted, the files are sealed," Fantino said. "It's a very significant loophole."

Fantino said there are documented cases of pardoned child sex abusers who have reoffended.

Since 1994, an estimated 12,000 criminal pardons have been given to sex offenders, with about 700 of them committing new sex crimes.

That information should be available to us so it can be part of the screening process for volunteers or employees," Fantino said.

Once they have been released and completed their parole, offenders must wait three to five years,

See RATE, page 4.

CRIME: Quick thinking customer traps suspect's get-away car

Clerk pepper-sprayed

BY MIKE ADLER
 STAFF WRITER

A teenaged clerk in a Stouffville variety store was pepper-sprayed by an attacker who gave no word of warning Thursday night, his brother said yesterday.

But some quick action from a frequent customer of the Ringwood Drive store trapped the clerk's alleged assailant and two girls arrested as his accomplices.

The helpful customer, hearing a commotion and seeing a man run from Stouffville Variety & Smoke, dashed out of the nearby

Dainty Donuts & Deli, got into his car and drove across Hwy. 47.

At the plaza across the street, the man parked to block a narrow laneway, cutting off the only escape route for a Pontiac containing the suspect and two girls.

The trio was then arrested by York Regional Police at about 9:30 p.m.

"He's a very nice guy. We call this kind of guy a hero, you know?" the variety store's owner, who did not want his name used, said of the customer.

The owner said his 18-year-old

brother was preparing to close the small, crowded store that night. The attacker, who had first visited to ask, "What time do you guys close?" returned wearing a mask.

He asked the clerk to give him a pack of gum and a pack of cigarettes, then sprayed him without warning.

Police said he fled without getting money.

"When my brother jumped on him and started screaming, he's scared of my brother," the owner said.

An 18-year-old Fort Erie man

has been charged with robbery, disguise with intent and possession of an offensive weapon.

The two females taken into custody, aged 18 and 17, were later released unconditionally.

Rick Card, owner of Patti-Lynn Interiors of Stouffville across the road, said he noticed a car running headlights off, behind his store at 8:15 p.m.

The owner of Stouffville Variety, who lives in Uxbridge, said he moved there and opened a store in Stouffville to enjoy the safety of a small town.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

The Stouffville Variety & Smoke store was the scene of a robbery Thursday night. The clerk was attacked by a masked customer who then fled empty-handed.

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