

THE NEWS

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Rate of pardons obscene: chief

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depending on the severity of the offence, before requesting a pardon. About one per cent of applications are denied.

"The amount of people pardoned in this country is, quite frankly, obscene," Fantino said.

Fantino, who is also president of the Ontario Police Chiefs Association, spoke in support of a private members bill brought in by a Reform MP.

Four days earlier, Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay tabled what Fantino called a "watered down" version of the same bill.

"These politicians appear to be playing one-upmanship instead of working together," he said. "The taxpayers are being taken for a ride."

The Liberal bill, tabled last Monday, stops well short of outlawing pardons for pedophiles.

Instead, convicted child molesters who have been pardoned would have a "red flag" placed

next to their name on CPIC — the cross-country police data base.

The person requesting a criminal clearance check — usually the person volunteering — could not be given a clearance record under that system.

But information about the person's record would still not be readily available to police. That would require a special request to the solicitor general's office to have the "seal" removed from the pardon.

The disclosure could only be released to the agency requesting the volunteer have clearance.

But Fantino said the system will create more unneeded bureaucracy. "I don't understand why police shouldn't have this information," he said. "It's not like we going to go out and broadcast it."

The Liberal bill also ignores calls for a national sex-offender registry. A registry would make the identities, criminal histories and whereabouts of sex offenders publicly available.

Thornhill couple carjacked from driveway

BY RICK VANDERLINDE
 STAFF WRITER

A late date turned into 2-1/2 hours of hell for a young Thornhill couple early Friday morning, when they were abducted by three armed carjackers.

A woman in her early 20s and her 24-year-old boyfriend were jumped at about 4:30 a.m. as they pulled into her parents' driveway at 44 Simonston Blvd.

Armed with a machete and a handgun, the masked bandits forced the couple into the back seat of their Mercedes, driving them around Markham for the next 2-1/2 hours.

York Regional Police said jewelry and cash were stolen. And although the couple was forced to hand over their bank cards, the crooks never stopped at a bank machine.

The ordeal ended at about 7 a.m., when the carjackers got the Mercedes stuck in a muddy construction site near McCowan Road and 16th Avenue.

"We believe they were attempting to turn around and they got stuck there," Staff-Sgt. Bruce

Powley said.

Powley said the male victim was hit over the head with a pistol and forced into the trunk.

After the bandits fled on foot, the woman let her boyfriend out of the trunk.

Powley said investigators believe the bandits plan to steal the luxury car was scuttled by the mud.

Neither victim was seriously hurt, but a friend who picked them up from the Markham police station said the couple had been terrorized.

"There were cuts in his mouth," the friend said. "They said it was because they put the gun in his mouth."

Two of the suspects are described as Asian males in their early 20s. The third suspect is described as male in his early 20s with a dark complexion.

Police are looking for links to similar crimes in the past few months, including the Feb. 11 murder of a 44-year-old Markham woman, Maria Wong was stabbed to death in her Raymerville Drive garage by two suspects who stole her Honda CRV, which was recovered a short time later.



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