

POLICE: A growing number of drivers are out for a high-speed rush on local highways and byways.

No breaks for drag racers

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

If you're going to drag race in York Region, be sure to bring good shoes — because you'll be walking home.

That's the message York Regional Police are giving to a growing number of drivers out for a high-speed rush on local highways and byways.

During a three-night blitz May 21 to 23, police pulled over 247 cars across the region.

Highway Traffic Act violations were issued to 121 drivers; 23 inspection notices were handed out for safety violations; eight drivers were given 12-hour alcohol-related suspensions; 11 vehicles were towed; and six drivers were charged criminally with offenses like impaired driving and possession of drugs.

"There can be upwards of 200 cars involved," said Const. Tom Sweet, one of several specially-trained officers with mechanical expertise as well as policy knowledge — such as Environmental Protection Act standards.

"For speed, the sky's the limit. We pulled over one guy in the Box Grove area doing 141 km-h in a 50 km-h zone," Sweet said.

Another racer, driving a motorcycle, passed an undercover police car doing 189 km-h in a 60 km-h zone.

Racers travel from Markham and areas north as far as Brampton. Favourite local haunts include the Markham by-pass, 14th Avenue near the tracks, and north of Victoria Square on Woodbine Avenue.

Some drivers are in their 30s and

40s, driving souped-up, full-fledged race cars worth upwards of \$35,000. Police have pulled over BMWs and Acura Integras with roll cages fitted inside, that have been modified for track racing and boast superior safety, Sweet said.

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"So they're safe, but too bad for the poor guy they could plow into."

But police worry more about the majority of drivers — in their teens to early 20s — driving lower-end cars.

"Those are the ones that get into

safety trouble. They do stupid things like cut the springs so the car sits lower. They cut corners and they're not concerned about their own safety, never mind that of anyone else," Sweet said.

"Hopefully it will be later rather than sooner, but we are going to have a very bad accident."

The 5 District Community Oriented Response unit co-operates with the Ontario Provincial Police and Peel Regional Police as well as newly-formed COR units at detachments across York Region to combat this problem.

More than 40 officers are involved at any given time, said COR Det. Norm Miles.

"We can seize the car — you can't do much racing with no car," he said. "We contact insurance companies through a 1-800 right on

the spot to make sure drivers are insured."

There can be upwards of 200 cars involved!

As well, insurance companies are notified about any modifications to the car, modifications insurers usually have no idea have taken place.

"That makes it a higher risk, which means higher premiums and they say 'pay it or we'll get rid of you,'" Sweet said.

And if drivers think they can outrun police with their hot cars — they should think again.

"We have low-profile, high-performance vehicles. We take extra courses, we have lots of experience driving at those speeds," Sweet said.

VOTE '99: Liberals, NDP seek non-profit providers

Home-care services undergo change

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

Among the huge changes in health care under the provincial Tories was the creation of Community Care Access Centres as one central access point for home-care services.

Under the umbrella of the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), all homemaking, nursing and therapy services are contracted out and must be bid on by providers.

In York Region, the Red Cross was shut down when it lost its home-making contract with the CCAC. Of the five agencies chosen to provide services, only one was a non-profit agency.

The CCAC based 75 per cent of its decision on the quality of care indicated in the proposal provided by the company and 25 per cent was based on pricing.

FIVE AGENCIES

Now five agencies, including Can-Care Health Services, CHATS, Interface Personnel Inc., Ontario Nursing Services Ltd. (ONS) and Regional Nursing Services, will share the personal support and homemaking contract.

The nursing contract was held by SRT Nursing Services, VON and St. Elizabeth's Nursing. They will continue providing service, but share with Olsten Health Services, a for-profit agency.

Shift nursing will be split between six agencies, including Olsten, ONS, Regional Nursing, SRT, Saint Elizabeth and VON.

Vaughan-King Aurora NDP candidate Michael Seaward takes issue with the Tory policy to put home-care contracts to a bidding process run by the newly-formed Community Care Access Centre.

"We would get rid of the process of using the for-profit agencies, where everything is about the bottom line and how much you can save this year," Seaward said.

The Liberals would keep the concept of CCACs, but also have a plan to provide 12 weeks unpaid leave to those who want to care for a loved one at home. Called the Family Medical Leave Act, the plan will provide up to 12 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave to employees of companies with more than 50 employees.

"We need one publicly funded system everyone can be proud of," Thornhill Liberal candidate Dan Ronen said.

THE FACES OF NATURE



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Canadian Tire presented an environmental award to Orchard Park Public School yesterday in the form of a \$1,000 cheque. The funds will buy six maple trees from Stevens' Tree Sales and Service of Stouffville. Here, Henry Stevens, left, owner/operator of Stevens' and Ian MacKenzie, manager of the Stouffville Canadian Tire store, hold the leaves and the birds which will be in the trees, represented by Orchard Park students, from left; Stephen Simpson, 9; Jennifer Martin, 10; Rachel Peters, 9; Vincent Holland, 10; Johnny Hoermann, 10; and Katherine Grezos, 9.

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