

POLICE: Strippers brought to Canada from Eastern Europe, Asia and South America

Bunnies strip bar busted

BY CHRISTOPHER DOURIS
Staff Writer

Six strippers, six managers and three patrons have been charged with prostitution offences after a mid-day raid at a Markham strip club yesterday.

The raids were the result of a five-month investigation of an organization that brought women to Canada from Eastern Europe, Asia and South America.

Some of (the women) knew why, some of them didn't. Some of them thought they were going to be go-go girls and chorus dancers, said Det. Sgt. Mike Fleming, vice squad commander for York Regional Police.

Police are looking for connections to organized crime groups, he said.

This is largely an untapped area.

The investigation found all those arrested were in the country legally.

The investigation involved officers from York and Peel regions, Toronto and the RCMP and Citizenship and Immigration.

In a media briefing in Markham before the raid, Fleming said the operation was not related to a year-long prostitution and proceeds of crime investigation into the adult entertainment empire built up by Riccardo DiGiuseppe, 52, of Vaughan.

In that operation, police alleged DiGiuseppe was the kingpin of a multi-million-dollar bawdy house operation, which centred on Bunnies and the Fantasia strip club in Richmond Hill.



York Region Police Constable Tom Korte leads women who were arrested at Bunnies on Anderson Avenue yesterday afternoon.

Fleming said the names on Bunnies licences have changed, but to his knowledge, the bar hasn't been sold.

DiGiuseppe was arrested March 31 on prostitution and proceeds of crime charges,

along with wife Linda, nephew-by-marriage Aldo Collarile, long-time associates Aldo Vitale and Gerry Belliveau and Sean Ainsworth, Paul Trask and Mark Wakelin.

Speaking to reporters outside the strip

club at Hwy. 48 and Major Mackenzie Drive, Fleming said a hallway along the west wall of the club had been divided into private booths.

"We executed the search warrants at 2 p.m. We've always thought there was more at work here than just putting strippers out for entertainment," Fleming said.

He said it was a lucrative business, but could not say how much money was involved.

"It's difficult to put a ball park figure on it," he said, noting all the business was done with cash.

"They don't keep business records in the way a normal business does."

When asked by reporters how long the club would be closed, Fleming predicted, "It will be business as usual as soon as we pull out of here."

Lawyer Louis Fried said he was called by one of the club's managers but police wouldn't let him in the club.

"I don't know anything about the allegations," he said.

Fried pointed out there was a history of bad blood between Bunnies and York Region vice officers.

"I would call it, basically, a vendetta by York Regional Police," he said.

When asked if the ownership of the business had changed hands in the past year, Fried said he could not comment.

AMALGAMATION: Report on integrated system expected to be tabled in two weeks

York politicians study transit options

Don't put region
in driver's seat
of buses: politicians

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

York Region councillors have taken the first tentative steps toward creating a regional transit system.

Only don't call it that, because that would imply regional government would control the network and most councillors don't want to give up control of their local systems.

Councillors ordered staff Thursday to return in two weeks with a report comparing a regionally-run system with an integrated system.

Under the integrated system, municipalities would continue to operate their own buses with their town logos on the side.

A transit commission with local representatives would make sure buses crossed municipal borders to serve commuters.

Co-ordination with the region would still be required for major transit infrastructure



WAYNE
EMMERSON

Seeks action on
amalgamation

But Humeniuk stressed the region faces gridlock unless it can convince residents to get out of their cars and into transit. The region's population of 700,000 is expected to reach more than 1.1 million people by 2021.

Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson argued municipalities must retain control of their transit systems because politicians understand the level of service their residents want.

She doesn't want to be forced to come cap in hand, begging the region to provide a bus in her city.

and planning.

Most councillors made it clear that's the system they favour.

Newmarket Councillor Diane Humeniuk, who chairs the transit task force, wants to start building the commission in January, with the goal of having integrated transit in place by Jan. 1, 2001.

She didn't elaborate on service levels or the fare structure.

But Humeniuk stressed the region faces gridlock unless it can convince residents to get out of their cars and into transit. The region's population of 700,000 is expected to reach more than 1.1 million people by 2021.

Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson argued municipalities must retain control of their transit systems because politicians understand the level of service their residents want.

She doesn't want to be forced to come cap in hand, begging the region to provide a bus in her city.

But Markham Councillor Gord Landon argued it's time to implement a regionally operated transit system, a concept endorsed five years ago but never implemented because politicians and bureaucrats couldn't agree on one concept.

"We're talking again about tinkering with the transit system," he said.

"We think it's so important that people want to only ride around their municipality on a bus with their town's name on it. If we amalgamated into one city in York Region, it wouldn't change the way (people) ride the buses."

Despite years of negotiations, Landon said York politicians have made virtually no progress on improving services such as transit for residents.

While responsibility for plumbing services and sewage inspections has been transferred from the region to the municipalities, the public hasn't seen politicians make any visible changes to their services or the way the region is governed, he said.

While Thursday's workshop was promoted as a major forum to discuss the delivery of municipal services in the region, councillors again made little progress. They have been

debating the same issues on and off for five years.

"The headlines will say we didn't do a damn thing. I don't want to be accused of sticking my head in the mud," Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson said.

"I thought we were here to make things better. Obviously, we are not."

But Emmerson said some politicians' insistence on talking about municipal boundary changes is preventing progress being made on municipalities providing services more efficiently.

"Right now, we're pushing up our backs because everybody is looking at their territory."

But Markham Mayor Don Cousens said York must show the provincial government it is serious about cutting government.

"If we don't have something very visible to show Queen's Park (they will impose their own solution) they have concluded, and I think rightly so, that less government is less costly."

Cousens prefers three or four cities, integrating or sharing services among municipalities leaves a number of governance models open, he said.

WOODBINE
CHRYSLER JEEP

8280 Woodbine Ave., Markham
(south of Hwy. 7, west side)

905-415-2260

www.toronto.com/woodbinepc



CHRYSLER - DODGE - JEEP
PURCHASE ANY NEW OR USED VEHICLE
AND RECEIVE AT NO COST TO YOU

A SATELLITE DISH VALUE OF \$400

5 DAYS ONLY

INSTALLATION & PROGRAMING EXTRA

FREE
24" STARCHOICE
SATELLITE
DISH*

