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## Police stumble on credit card fraud

BY CHRISTOPHER DOURIS  
Staff Reporter

York Regional Police investigating a commercial break-in Monday got more than they bargained for when they found forged credit cards valued at \$9 million.

Fraud squad Det. Const. Mike Elliott said uniform officers were called to a break-in at a Leslie Street business complex early Monday after "a security guard on duty for the property managers discovered a front door kicked in."

The officers discovered a large quantity of blank credit cards in boxes on top of a desk.

They secured the building and called the fraud squad, Elliott said.

The 2,500 cards are "non-embossed, non-encoded and of fairly good quality," he said.

Based on the minimum value of the cards, which ranges from \$5,000 to \$20,000, the estimated street value of the haul is \$9 million.

The quantity of credit cards gives cause for concern, he said.

At some point they could be embossed with a valid bank number and encoded with the corresponding information.

Police arrested the owner of a renovation business in the office where the cards were found. There was no embossing equipment or electronic equipment, Elliott said, so he doesn't know if cards were being forged on the site.

He added there were no embossed or encoded cards found during the search. The bogus VISA cards included copies of



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Det. Const. Mike Elliott, of the York Regional Police fraud squad, displays one of 2,500 blank credit cards recovered during the investigation of a break-in at a Richmond Hill business.

First USA Platinum Cards, CHASE Royal, GIBC and Desjardin Gold Cards.

The high quality cards were created, printed, produced for fraud. They're pretty good, Elliott said. "We don't know where they were made. My guess is Hong Kong."

Police are investigating whether the business which occupied the premises was legitimate or a front for the credit card operation.

At least one other person is under investigation, Elliott said.

There are several other people associated with the business and we'd like to talk to them.

A 47-year-old Richmond Hill man faces possession of forged credit cards and possession of instruments of forgery charges.

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## Bunnies stripped of liquor license

BY CHRISTOPHER DOURIS  
Staff Reporter

A Markham strip club is dry after Toronto Police and liquor inspectors served an interim liquor licence suspension Tuesday night.

According to a police source familiar with the investigation, the order, calling for an immediate prohibition of the sale of alcohol at Bunnies, was signed by Alcohol and Gaming Commission chairperson Claire Lewis earlier in the evening and served by officers at 9 p.m.

"They stopped serving last night," the source said. "They were selling pop last night for exorbitant prices."

The suspension was a result of Project Almonzo, a joint police project targeting strip clubs operating as brothels. Police raided the Anderson Avenue bar Oct. 15.

Police set up their investigation after hearing about women from Eastern Europe and South and Central America being brought to Canada under false pretenses and forced to work as prostitutes in Toronto-area strip clubs.

There was no evidence of dancers being lured to Bunnies under false pretenses, police said after the raid.

Police arrested 19 people, including four operating in management capacities at the club.

Most of those people are to make their next court appearance Nov. 26.

Police allege sexual services, such as masturbation, oral sex and intercourse were available in the club's VIP rooms.

Also during the raid, police found two computers in a private area of the club hooked up to video cameras, which

had the potential to be used on the Internet.

### Carjacking thwarted

York Regional Police are crediting timely intervention by observant citizens for thwarting a carjacking outside an upscale Richmond Hill restaurant.

Shortly after 4 p.m. Tuesday, citizens alerted police about a suspicious vehicle parked in the lot at Papparazzi Restaurant on West Beaver Creek Road, Sgt. John Sheldon said.

Officers found two men inside a stolen 1992 Chevrolet Lumina. Police found two replica handguns when they arrested the men. Further investigation revealed the pair had targeted a 1997 Mercedes for carjacking.

Two Toronto men were to appear in court yesterday morning for a bail hearing on dangerous weapons, conspiracy to commit robbery, theft over \$5,000 and possession over \$5,000 charges.

### Student abducted and assaulted

A Richmond Hill student was snatched from the parking lot of Bayview Secondary School and beaten by six people.

Around noon, the 16-year-old was in the parking lot of the school when a red, full-size GMC van pulled up.

One occupant got out, talked to the victim, then grabbed him and forced him into the van. They drove to another location a short distance away, beat the victim and took some property.

The victim suffered a broken nose and other minor injuries.

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