

# York Regional officer honoured after helping in Lake Ontario rescue

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

A York Regional Police officer was among 14 cops and firefighters to receive bravery awards from Lieutenant Governor Hillary Weston at Queen's Park Thursday.

Const. Ezra (Tony) Browne, 51, was off duty, riding his bike at Humber Bay Park in Toronto about 9 p.m. Aug. 4, when he heard frantic cries for help.

He looked up and saw three men thrashing in the water, about 30 metres off-shore, a small 14-foot Sidewinder boat sinking fast nearby.

Browne, a 19-year-veteran, told his friend to call 911, then dived into the water to help.

He managed to pull three of the four men to safety, then spent another 20 minutes searching for the other victim in the dark.

Despite his efforts, the man could not be located and his body was recovered the following day.

Toronto Police said his lifejacket was not fastened properly and had popped off.

"After speaking to the three survivors, it is apparent to me Sgt. Browne assisted them in reaching shore safely and made a valiant effort in attempting to locate and rescue the missing man," reads a memo from Toronto Police to Browne's Staff-Sgt. Rick Metcalfe.

Weston and Solicitor General/Markham MPP David Tsubouchi presented Browne with the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery, the province's top honour.

## Charges laid against five men in teenage prostitution case

York Regional Police have charged five men with sex offences after a 14-year-old Alberta run-away was forced into prostitution.

The girl called her family to tell them she was in Richmond Hill after being missing more than two weeks.

The family notified the Alberta RCMP, which in turn notified York officers.

The girl told them she had met three men in the Bathurst Street-Finch Avenue area Sept. 4, just hours after she arrived in the GTA.

Police say she was forced to work as a prostitute in hotels and motels across the region, then hand over her earnings.

A 22-year-old Markham man was arrested Oct. 31 at the Regency Hotel and charged with sexual assault, invitation to sexual touching and sexual interference.

Four others, 18, 19, 20 and 25, all from Toronto, are charged with numerous offences.

Among those charges are sex assault, procuring a prostitute, making child pornography and living off the avails of prostitution.

The Children's Aid Society is involved.

## Clerk struck during Thursday robbery of Markham shop

A shop on Markham Main Street is missing more than \$1,500 worth of drug paraphernalia and police are searching for a suspect.

A man entered the Peace Pipe store in the Village Lanes just after 3 p.m. Thursday, wandered around and left. He returned a few minutes later, asking the clerk for baggies.

She asked him to wait outside while

she checked in the back room, then unlocked the door and let him back in.

When he said he probably didn't have enough money, she replied he could buy what he could pay for.

However, police say he pushed her out of the way, came behind the counter and began loading up his knapsack with paraphernalia, including the baggies, scales and pipes.

As the clerk struggled with him, asking what he was doing, he swung the scales at her striking her in the arm.

When the knapsack was filled he fled, tripping twice on his way down the

stairs.

When the clerk returned to the counter, she noticed the man had left six \$5 bills.

He's described as male, non-white, 18 or 19 years old, with a small head and a scrunched-up face.

He has short black hair, brown eyes and was clean shaven. He wore a dark baseball cap, a dark bomber jacket, dark baggy pants and a black knapsack with a yellow cord.

Anyone with information is asked to call 881-1221, ext. 7500 or Crime Stoppers at 222-TIPS.



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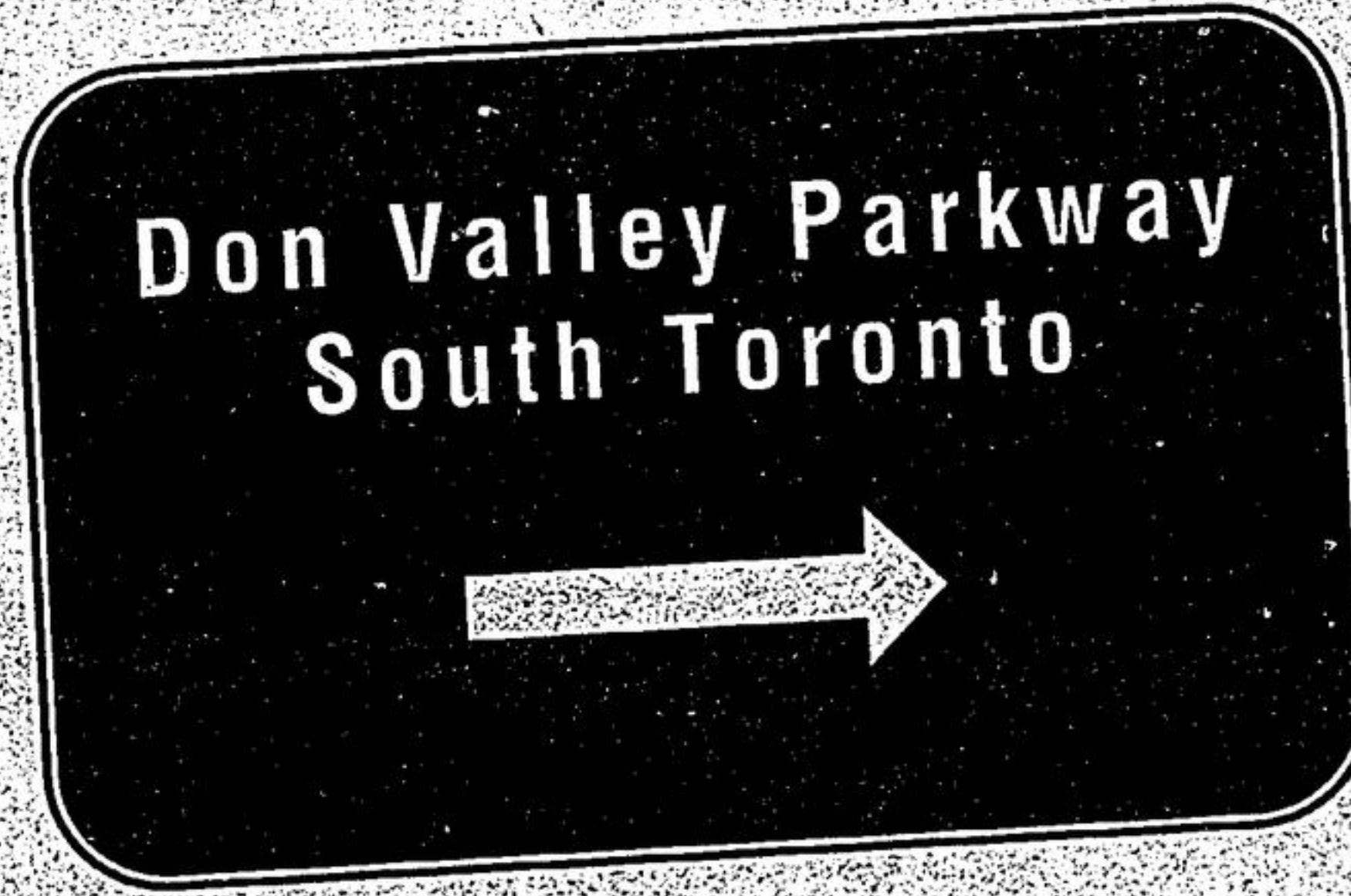
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