

Markham woman escapes injury after knife attack

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Reporter

A 25-year-old Markham woman escaped injury after she was threatened with a knife and robbed Tuesday evening. She was walking home along a pedestrian walkway in the Steeles-Maitland Avenues area in Markham when she was approached from behind.

The suspect put the knife to her throat and demanded she hand over cash, which she did. He then fled, with about \$45, southbound on the pathway towards Steeles Avenue.

The woman was not hurt. The suspect is described as male, five-feet-ten-inches tall, wearing a black jacket and black pants. Anyone with information is asked to call 881-1221 or Crime Stoppers (222-TIPS).

Marijuana found at high school, teens charged

More than \$3,000 worth of marijuana was seized and five teens charged in the parking lot of Markham's Middlefield Collegiate Institute Monday night.

Undercover officers from the force's drugs and vice unit had the lot under surveillance, said Const. Steve Morrell.

As they watched, two cars pulled in beside each other and police became suspicious. When they approached the vehicles, they discovered several mini-pouches of marijuana,

allegedly intended for sale.

Scales and an undisclosed amount of cash was also seized. Two men, 18 and 19, and one woman, 18, from Markham are charged with possession of a controlled substance. Two 19-year-olds from Scarborough are also charged with possession. The 19-year-old from Markham and one of the Scarborough residents face an additional charge of possession for the purpose of trafficking.

Youth charged in 52 false alarms using 911

A 17-year-old Richmond Hill youth that police have dubbed 'the boy who cried wolf' is charged after 52 false calls were made to 911 since last summer.

The caller reported such serious emergencies as children drowning, stabbings, building fires and personal injury car accidents requiring a full response from police, fire and ambulance. "They were all alarming calls," said Det-Sgt. Paul Pedersen. "Initially the entire emergency service would respond, and in at least one incident, even the helicopter. But within a short period of time, we established a pattern. It was like the boy who cried wolf."

Pedersen recalled one incident last fall when a caller reported an overturned car in Lake Wilcox and children drowning. He said even though at times police suspected some calls — all made from a cellular phone — may be false,

they still had to respond. Working with a cell telephone security company he declined to name, Pedersen said police launched a seven-month long investigation which led to Monday's arrest of the Richmond Hill boy.

"We're pretty confident he watched us respond from somewhere near the area," Pedersen said. "It seems to have started out as a prank and just mushroomed."

The youth is charged with 52 counts of leaving a false message. He appears in court Feb. 26.

Farmers want cash from government

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food production in Canada.

- an immediate cash infusion to enable them to plant crops this spring.

- A national agricultural support program to provide long-term equity with government subsidies provided to farm producers in Quebec, the USA, Europe and Japan.

- An inquiry into the vertical integration of agricultural industries.

The demands will be presented to Prime Minister Jean Chretien at a national farm rally to be held on Parliament Hill when the On-to-Ottawa trek arrives in the capital.

Last spring, Parsons pulled into York Region driving Prairie Belle, a 42-metre wide Massey Ferguson 860 combine harvester. A giant sign attached to the front of Prairie Belle said it all: "Farm Crisis Very Real for Western Canada Family Farms."

One thing is certain: Parsons and his combine are not overlooked. He's been noticed in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

Western farmers haven't experienced such financial hardships since the Dirty '30s. East Gwillimbury farmer Don Chapman said "Bankruptcies are common and hope of recovery is dwindling, he stressed."

Parsons couldn't sit back and watch it take him or his community under.

Parsons left his farm and family in Dawson Creek and over the past year, has spent most of his time bringing the plight of the farmer to the attention of the public.

Parsons knows first-hand the hardships of the western farmer. Economic reality hit his 1,250 acre ranch and hit it hard. He grows top-quality grain and oilseed. However, grain prices have fallen to 1970s levels while operating costs have risen. Since 1995, wheat prices

have fallen by 50 per cent. During the same time, the propane for Parsons' farm truck doubled in price. Profits are eaten up by equipment depreciation, fuel, fertilizer and seed.

Once in Ottawa, Parsons plans to tell the prime minister that his colleagues need respect.

To stress his point further, Parsons even wrote to the Queen, telling her that if the hardship continues, rural Canada will change forever.

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