



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Between Nov. 15 and 20, York Regional Police investigated a whopping 21 residential break-ins around the region. Some involved thieves walking into house and garages through unlocked doors, but most took place after windows and doors were pried open or kicked in.

The violation of break-ins

Even York Region's rural residents aren't immune from crime

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defeated, a feeling of personal violation," Ransberry said.

This was followed by sadness which turned into anger, especially when she discovered those who had broken into her home had opened the gifts nearby and smashed and vandalized some of the contents.

"You mind it when they steal," she said, "but when they take it and smash it, it's like rubbing your

face in it."

Although it cost her about \$500 to replace the gifts, one item was irreplaceable: a child's Christmas stocking that had been made by her 94-year-old mother for one of the great-grandchildren.

"That can never be replaced," Ransberry said. "It's stuff only a family can give a damn about."

Ransberry is not alone. Every day of the week, York Regional Police issue reports of residential break-ins, reports that

seldom, if ever, are mentioned in the newspapers because they happen so frequently.

Between Nov. 15 and Nov. 20, for example, police reported 21 residential break-ins in Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Aurora and Georgina.

Five of those incidents involved thieves walking into houses and garages through unlocked doors.

Thieves took cash, jewelry, electronic equipment and even prescription medicine, as well as, in

one case, the resident's car.

In another case, nothing was stolen but the culprit poured an unknown substance into the gas tank of the resident's vehicle.

Losses ranged from nil — (the thieves were frightened away by the homeowner's return) — to over \$56,000. That was the value of two Harley Davidson motorcycles that were stolen from one homeowner's garage.

Theft, however, is not all that the victims have to face. There's often the question of damage which can range into the hundreds of dollars.

Not all of the break-ins were the result of careless or trusting homeowners, however.

Windows and doors were pried, kicked and smashed open. Nevertheless, police say there are a number of measures homeowners can take to make it more difficult for would-be thieves.

Burglars go through neighbourhoods looking for uncut lawns,

- Change your locks if keys have been lost or stolen.

- Doors should have sturdy frames with hinges that cannot be removed.

- When moving into a new house or apartment, ensure all the locks have been changed.

- Always lock your garage.

See BASEMENT, page 10.

See KEY-IN-LOCK, page 10.

How to avoid becoming a burglary statistic

If burglars are certain no one is home, they will be more likely to break in.

They'll look for uncut lawns and stuffed mailboxes. And they'll case a neighborhood, searching for darkened houses or lights that have been left on too long.

To protect your home or business, follow these rules:

- Keep a record of serial num-

bers and descriptions of your household possessions.

- Inscribe your driver's licence or social insurance number on your possessions so that police can identify them and ensure their return.

- Install secure locks, preferably deadbolts.

- Do not leave notes on your door, even if you'll only be gone for a short time.

Info Box

• boxingDAY •

Coming up

Watch for our Boxing Day edition in which staff writers explore the year ahead in politics, health care, social services, the environment, sports and recreation, education, entertainment and community.

We will also salute up-and-coming young people across York Region and let you know about the people who will lead us into the future.

• sportsREC •

"Putt" up with winter

For those not able to escape to warmer climes, there are places in York Region where you can continue to swing a club during downtime in the local golfing calendar.

Indoor golf has become a viable alternative.

Staff writer Mike Hayakawa explores the growing popularity of indoor golf facilities and the various services they offer. See our Sports & Recreation section starting on page 16.

• movieREVIEWS •

Thumbs up

Seen a good movie lately? You could win movie passes simply by writing a brief description of why you liked a flick for the eGuide that appears in our Tuesday newspapers.

To submit your review, go to www.yorkregion.com and click on the movie reel on the home page. If you see your submission chosen for publication as the eGuide's critic's pick, contact Anne Howland at ahowland@erabanner.com to arrange to pick up your movie passes. So give us your best critic's pick.

• surfin'CITY •

www.askmen.com

OK, guys, have you left your Christmas shopping until the last minute? Have you bravely volunteered to cook holiday dinner this year? Check out this website for shopping suggestions and tips to help you survive the mall Dec. 24, as well as guidelines on picking and cooking the perfect turkey and all the fixings. There are also fashion, health care and entertainment tidbits with a definitely masculine twist.

Cosmopolitan
Markham's Destination Gift Shop

Holiday Hours:
Mon-Fri: 10-8
Sat: 9-6, Sun: 12-5
Boxing Day (Dec. 26) 9-5

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