

# Cops forbid giving media wrong info, chief says

BY JEROME WATT  
Staff Writer

Despite the testimony of one of his officers at the ongoing Maria Wong murder trial, York Regional Police Chief Robert Middaugh said his force's policy forbids giving the media false information to further an investigation.

"Never," he said. "My position is the media get all the facts."

While on the witness stand last week, Det.-Sgt. Les Young admitted to giving a false composite sketch to the media in June 1999 to aid his investigation into Mrs. Wong's murder. Chief Middaugh was not chief of York Regional Police at the time.

Det.-Sgt. Young said he gave the media a fake composite drawing of a suspect in the Markham killing as a ruse to create activity among suspected murderers so investigators could gather more information.

The drawing was actually of Christian Ortiz made up to look like a composite sketch. Mr. Ortiz was a suspect police already had under investigation.

"We are hoping someone recognizes this person and lets us know," Mr. Young was quoted as saying by the Economist & Sun/Tribune when he unveiled the sketch to the media in 1999.

Mr. Ortiz along with the woman's husband, Shu Kwan (Johnny) Wong, Andre Jones and Norman Figueroa have each been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit murder and first-degree murder. They have all pleaded not guilty.

James Pierce, another suspect in the case, has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder in another trial and was given a 16-year sentence after agreeing to testify for the crown.

In a voice mail message to a reporter, Mr. Young said he couldn't comment on his use of the false composite because he was still testifying at the trial.

Chief Middaugh also refused to comment on the issue until the case is over.

He said the position of his department is never to mislead the media while providing certain facts that won't jeopardize the case. He said he'd review the situation with Det.-Sgt. Young at the completion of the trial.

"There are two sides to the story," he said. "I'll look into it to find out the other side."

Mr. Middaugh said releasing false information can be extremely damaging to the relationship between police and the media.

"It's the most important accountability process next to the police services board," he said.

David Barrow, chair of the police services board, said he'll wait until Chief Middaugh's review before

commenting.

"I would hope we always give out factual information," he said. "The unwritten policy should be we don't hand out misinformation."

Giving out misleading or false information damages the public perception

of the police, Mr. Barrow said, adding some members of the public wouldn't have a problem with the police releasing misinformation in order to catch criminals.

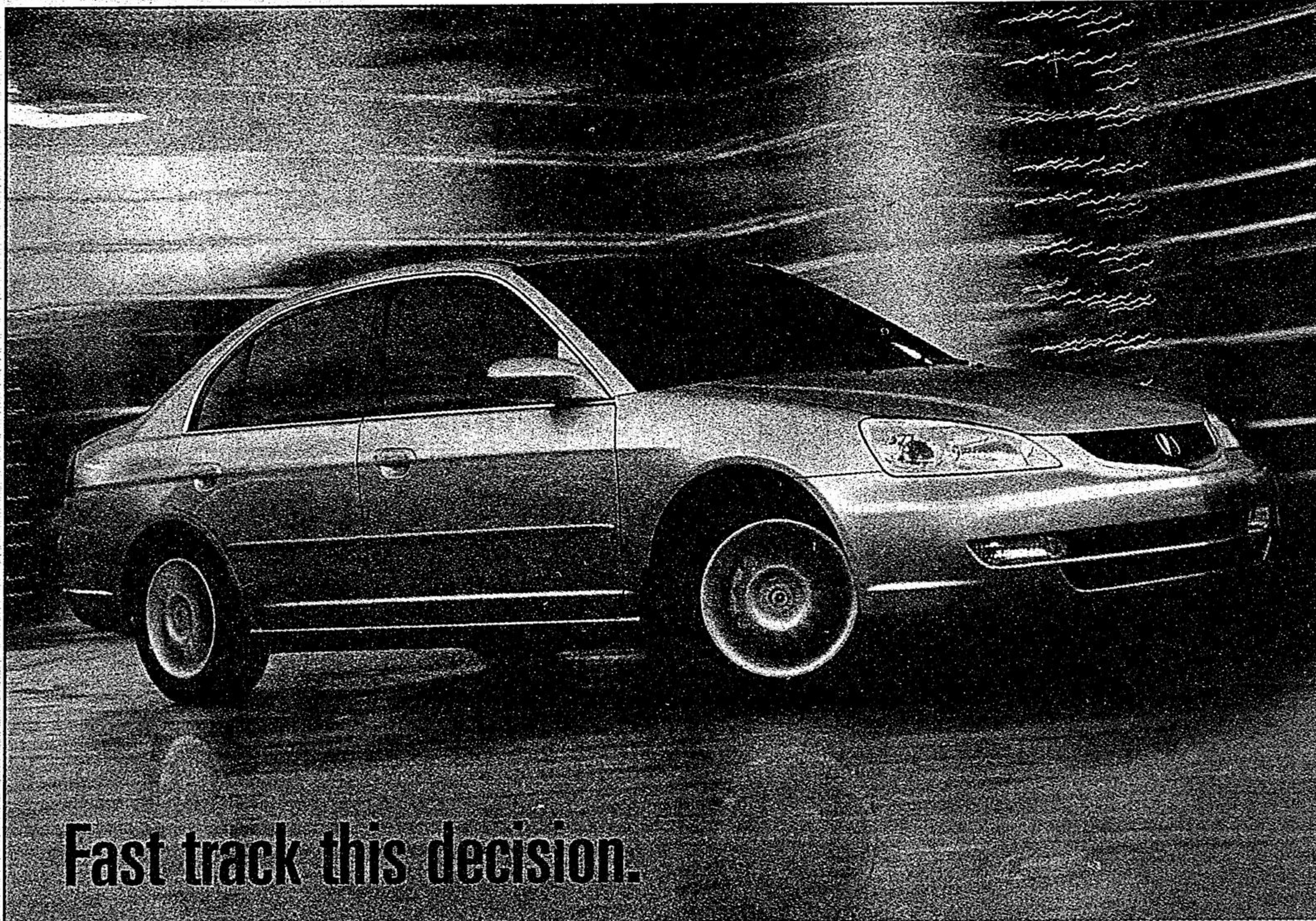
"You'll have some members of the public say the ends justifies the

means," he said. "I'm sure you'll have a mixed reaction from the public."

Det. John Sheldon who was the spokesperson for York Regional Police in 1999 said he doesn't remember the

See DONT, page 13.

**S** No cuts to psychiatric beds!  
**Schizophrenia Society of Ontario**  
1-800-449-6367  
www.web.net/~sso  
This message brought to you as a community service of The Economist & Sun



Fast track this decision.

**\$278/mth.**

**The 2002 EL.** We think the sleek-looking Acura EL is a proposal everyone can get behind. It features a responsive VTEC engine, 4-wheel independent suspension and side airbags. Plus, you get air conditioning, power window and door locks, keyless entry, CD player and a plentiful array of standard features. Some decisions are quicker than others. Visit Acura in Markham with haste.



\*LIMITED TIME LEASE OFFER based on the 2002 EL Touring 5-speed (model ES3562E) and available through Honda Canada Finance Inc. Lease payments are \$278 per month for 48 months. O.A.C. Down payment or equivalent trade of \$2,565, first monthly payment and security deposit required. A.L.R. 5.8%. Total lease obligation of \$16,711. 96,000 km allowance (12¢ per km exceeding 96,000 applies), destination charges (\$900) included. Taxes, licence and insurance are additional. Option to purchase at lease end for \$10,199 plus taxes. Dealer may lease for less. See Acura in Markham for details.

**ACURA IN MARKHAM**

**905-948-8866**

5201 Highway #7 East, Markham (at McCowan)

**NEW**  
**BLACK STACK BBQ**  
griller

- 2 Seasoned flame-broiled patties
- Smoked natural cheddar cheese
- Black Stack BBQ sauce
- Full strips of bacon
- Onion rings

**@ BK YOU GOT IT.**

At participating Canadian BURGER KING restaurants

**COLLECT ALL 10 @ BK!**

**III IN BLAC**

One toy in every KIDS MEAL. Limited time offer while supplies last.