

Police service should add 95 officers annually: union

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policies to shore up a police force that he says isn't keeping pace with the population it serves.

He estimates as many as 55 new officers need to be brought on board each year, just to keep up with growth; another 40 hires annually would counter depletion in

the ranks due to retirement. "We are cautiously optimistic the chief is going to put together a package that's going to see us better represented in the police-to-popu-

lation ratio," Mr. Miskiw said. Any hiring revisions will require a significant increase in York Region's police budget, which this year rings in at more than \$120 million. But

there is political will and public support for those increases, said Linda Jackson, new regional councillor for Vaughan.

"As long as people see cops patrolling their neighbourhoods, they'll feel their money is well-spent," Ms Jackson said.

"I think people would pay whatever it takes on their tax bills to see that," she said. "As long as they can see the results, it makes it all worthwhile."

Newly elected Newmarket Councillor Larry Blight also supports a greater police presence. Prior to the municipal election, he was among a

group of Newmarket candidates who appeared at the police services board, pitching the 1:700 ratio.

"Our police department is very understaffed," Mr. Blight said this week. "It would be nice to increase the number of officers we have; of course, that all hinges on finances."

Both politicians said, in addition to more bodies, management of the force's human resources is crucial.

They applauded the recently launched Safe Streets, Nice Neighbourhoods initiative, which features strategic deployment of traffic officers to address high-complaint residential areas.

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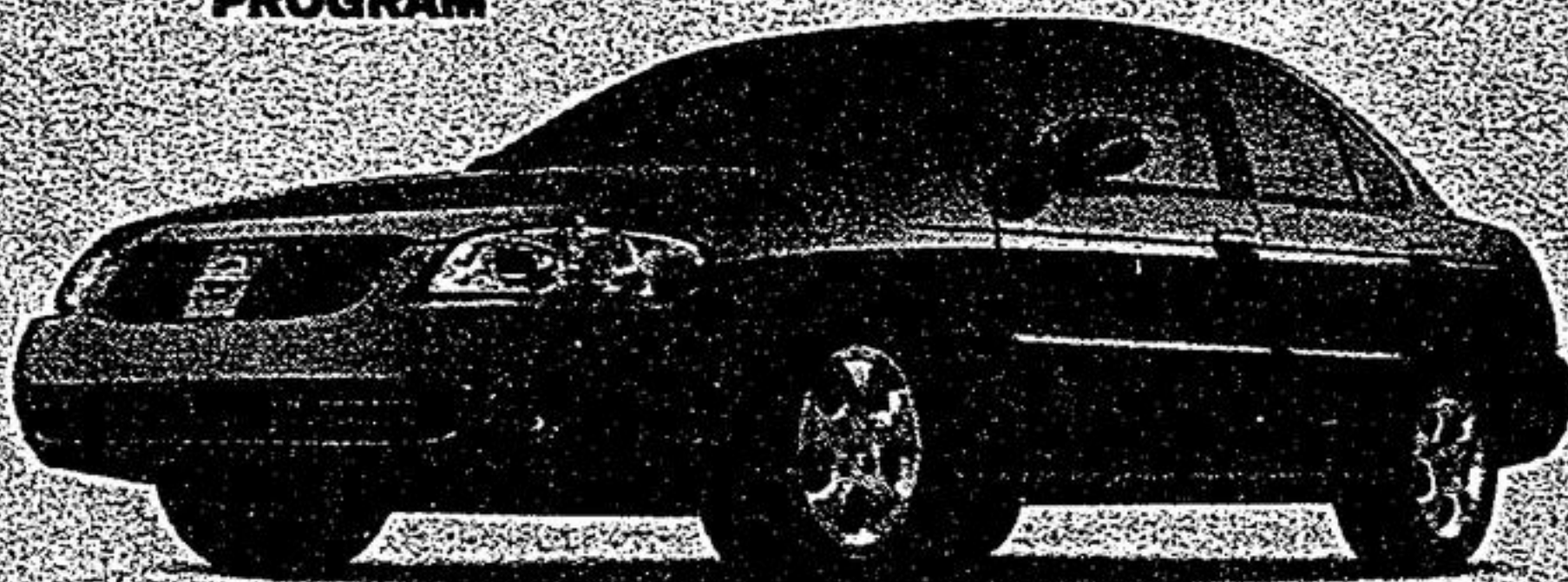
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