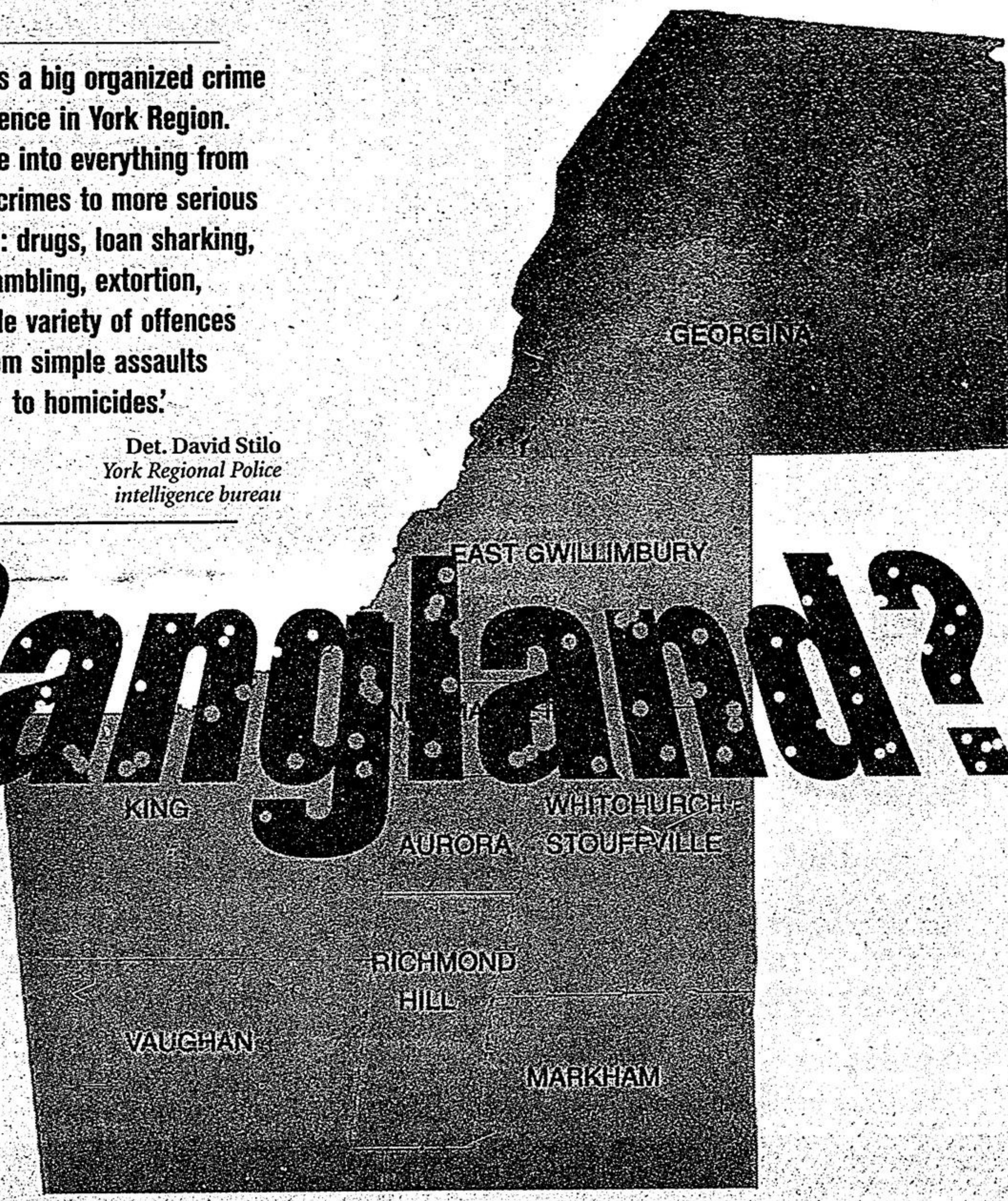


**'There is a big organized crime presence in York Region. They're into everything from street crimes to more serious crimes: drugs, loan sharking, gambling, extortion, a wide variety of offences from simple assaults to homicides.'**

Det. David Stilo  
York Regional Police  
intelligence bureau

# Gangland?



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## Younger criminals play Hollywood roles

From page 1.

the part, Det. Stilo said.

"Usually the younger members of the organization like to play that Hollywood type role, the upper level members like to keep a low profile. They don't want to attract attention to themselves," Det. Stilo said. "People see an Italian guy driving an Escalade or dressed in a nice suit and they figure he's in the mafia. It's just like with bikers. They see a heavy set guy with a goatee on a Harley and people assume he's a member of an outlaw biker gang. That's not always the case. It all depends on their role in organization. If they're doing collections, or if they're the muscle, if they want to intimidate, they'll be more visible. Those at the upper level, they want to keep things at arm's length."

Antonio Nicaso, who has written close to a dozen books on organized crime, says York Region is a major area of

investment for criminal organizations.

"There is room for investment in York Region. It is a good place to invest money, legitimate money," he said.

The criminal groups invest money made outside the region in legitimate businesses here, Mr. Nicaso said.

"They use front men you would never suspect to be running a business for criminals," he said.

Like any business person, they are attracted by relatively low taxes and developable land.

"Sometimes, someone gets too greedy or someone makes a mistake and they are shot dead, but that's a business decision. Sometimes murder is a business necessity from a criminal perspective," Mr. Nicaso said.

The face of organized crime has changed, says the retiring head of the RCMP's organized crime unit, Chief Supt. Ben Soave.

These days, ethnic boundaries no

longer divide organized crime groups. Instead, larger criminal organizations are forged with different criminal groups lending expertise to one another.

"There's no longer turf wars. These criminal organizations don't operate in isolation. You've got Russians, Italians, Asians and bikers all working together," he said.

York Region's ethnic diversity is particularly attractive to this new breed of criminal organization, Det. Stilo said.

"You have traditional organized crime primarily in Vaughan and Asian organized crime based in Markham where they are geographically so close to one another that they can work together to obtain their goals," Det. Stilo said.

"Each group seems to be involved more heavily in certain offences, like Asian organized crime is more involved in marijuana grow houses, but we're finding as time goes by, more and more of them are working together here."

## 22 cops track organized crime

York Regional Police have 22 investigators keeping a close eye on local organized crime.

"We monitor people we've identified as involved in organized crime and gather intelligence on their criminal activity," said Det. David Stilo, a 13-year veteran of the organized crime unit.

"Each case is extremely complex and very interesting from a police perspective."

The bureau helps other officers investigate crimes that may have links to organized crime, Det. Stilo said.

"We'll go out in the community to see if any people are having problems with organized crime, being extorted or having to pay protection money. Wherever we think we can obtain information, we go," he said.

"As a result, York police have been involved in some of the largest organized crime arrests in Canadian history.

In July 1998, after a two year investigation, dubbed Project Omerta, the RCMP's combined forces special enforcement unit, working closely with York Regional Police, arrested several

key members of the Cuntrera-Caruana Sicilian crime family, one of the most established and largest drug smuggling and money laundering organizations in the world.

The family's leader, Alfonso Caruana, was living in Woodbridge at the time.

He was convicted in 2000 and sentenced to 18 years for conspiracy to import and traffic in a controlled substance. Mr. Caruana was ordered extradited back to Italy in 2004.

— Martin Derbyshire