



STAFF PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/MIKE BARRETT

# Asphalt anger

Jammed roadways, stupid antics fuel rage of York Region motorists

BY LINDA JOHNSON  
Staff Writer

And you think road rage is bad in the GTA. Relaxing in a Richmond Hill coffee shop near the site of a road rage incident a week ago that critically injured two young men, Lucy Muriithi recalled an event in Kenya.

It began when a prominent doctor found himself stopped behind a bus picking up passengers. When the bus driver failed to respond to his shouts to move, the doctor took out a gun and shot him.

After witnesses stopped him and he was arrested, the doctor said he didn't mean to kill the driver, who recovered. He just wanted to scare him.

"That's the most extreme case I've heard of," she said, adding she has never experienced any incident nearly so bad in Canada.

Still, there's no doubt road rage incidents here are increasing in number and violence.

Last Sunday's incident seems to have been caused by a driver's decision to stop in the exit of the Petro Canada gas station at Bayview and 16th avenues to look for some misplaced cash.

Instead of going around, a driver behind pulled up beside the stopped Honda. After yelling obscenities at the driver, he then pursued the Honda out of the station, ramming the car at the intersection, then following it along 16th and south on Leslie Street.

After bumping into the side of the Honda, the pursuer in a Daewoo slid into the north-bound lanes, hitting another car.

The driver, 21, and 22-year-old passenger of the Daewoo are still in critical condition, according to Sgt. David Mitchell of York Regional Police traffic division. Officers are trying to determine if the men in the Daewoo and the victim knew each other, he said.

Police are not releasing names.

Sgt. Mitchell said road rage is a symptom of the increasing number of drivers on the roads.

"We're answering more calls. That's due to sheer volume on the road. Rush hour is now 24/7. There's more people and more activity on the highway. So, it inevitably means there are more occurrences on the streets."

A lot of drivers are already frustrated at the time it takes to get somewhere. So, when someone cuts in front or changes a lane without signalling, they lose it.

**'If you plan your day, then road rage would not exist. But people leave late and then they think they should have more priority than other drivers.'**

Lucy Muriithi  
motorist

David Peirce of Newmarket agrees the increasing volume on GTA roads is bound to lead to more road rage. He's had drivers shouting obscenities, tailgating and others cutting him off.

"I think the highways are dated for the volume of cars we have on the road," he said. "They are about 30 to 40 years old and they're not designed for the traffic volume we have now."

However, Ms Muriithi said too many drivers are in a hurry. They should give themselves more time when they know they have to be somewhere.

"If you plan your day, then road rage would

not exist. But people leave late and then they think they should have more priority than other drivers," she said.

Michael O'Murphy said many drivers get angry because cars are travelling too close to them.

"A lot of people like to tailgate with their high beams on. It ticks people off. They're late for something, but you have to respect others," he said.

Clarabella Yim of Thornhill agreed anger on the roads is an unavoidable product of congestion. Part of the problem is the lack of a good, accessible public transit system.

"Everyone is driving their own cars and there's a lot of stress building up," she said, adding drivers in a hurry make poor decisions.

"When people are driving, there's a certain persona that comes over them so they're not their normal selves. It's a combination of stress and other factors."

Drivers who believe they are in the middle of a serious road rage incident and fear for their safety should, like the Honda driver in last week's incident, use a cell phone to call the police, Sgt. Mitchell said.

"If you have the ability to make a call, that's great. And start heading for the closest police station," he said.

However, he added, drivers should try to prevent incidents by defusing others' irritation. If you do something that bothers someone else, put your hand up to apologize.

If someone else does something wrong, remember the unannounced lane change in front of you may be an honest mistake.

"Take cars out of the equation. Apply it to situation in a mall; if someone bumped into you, they'd probably say 'sorry about that.' That goes a long way to defuse the situation," he said.

## Rule may force thieves into homes

BY PATRICK MANGION  
Staff Writer

Your next set of wheels may be safer from car thieves, but it could cost you more to drive it off the lot.

The federal government announced last week all new vehicles sold in Canada must be equipped with an anti-theft immobilizer by September 2007.

While some industry experts heralded the move as a blow to car theft, others are concerned thieves may become more brazen as a result of the new regulations.

More than 7,500 vehicles were stolen across the Greater Toronto Area last year, said Bill Davis, executive director of the automobile dealers association of Ontario.

Whatever immobilizers add to the price of a new vehicle could be offset by a decrease in insurance rates, Mr. Davis added.

The technology makes hot-wiring next to impossible. A transponder embedded in the key emits an encrypted signal to the car's computer, telling it the right person has tried to start the car. That signal allows ignition and fuel flow and turns on electronics.

However, with new vehicles becoming increasingly difficult to hot wire, thieves may shift their focus to taking driver's keys, he said.

"People will need to be more careful with their keys," Mr. Davis said.

Last year, 43 vehicles, mostly luxury cars, were stolen in York Region after thieves broke into homes, York Regional Police Det. William Goetz said. During a four-week span last spring, eight high-end vehicles were stolen from Vaughan homes after keys were stolen in house break-ins.

There have been eight similar incidents so far this year.

"There's been no major incidents yet where someone has been caught in someone's home. Someone's going to get hurt if the wrong guy gets confronted. There will be violence," Det. Goetz said.

Thieves may also focus on older model vehicles, without anti-theft devices, Det. Goetz said.

The sleek lines and sporty finish of the Subaru Impreza WRX has landed it atop Canada's most stolen vehicle list.

But that's misleading, said James Vergilio, general manager of Markham Subaru.

The Impreza is a popular car. If there are more on the road, they're more likely to be stolen.

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