

Robberies, youth crime up during first half of 2005

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Staff Writer

The number of murders, sexual assaults and stolen cars in York Region were down during the first half of 2005.

But robberies, drinking and driving and youth crime are on the rise.

York Regional Police released statistics from the first six months of 2005 during a police services board meeting Wednesday showing demand for service dropped from 128,189 calls in the first six months of 2005 to 120,859 this year.

"I think what we're continuing to see is that crime, overall, is on the decrease," York Regional Police

Chief Armand La Barge said. "But that doesn't necessarily mean there aren't things we are concerned about."

Topping the list of concerns is the recent rise in robberies.

The jump from 185 during the first six months of 2004 to 199 this year represents the highest number reported since 1999. This includes an increase in home invasions, from eight in the first six months of 2004 to 17 in the first half of 2005, though home invasions represent just 8.5 per cent of all robberies.

Retail robberies represent 32.2 per cent, car jacking 4.5 per cent and muggings 50.8 per cent. The remaining 4 per cent include finan-

cial, ATM and deposit robberies.

Youth crime was also up 18.7 per cent during the first six months of 2005. Charges laid against young persons increased 15.5 per cent and the number of youths dealt with by other means increased 20.6 per cent.

But Chief La Barge doesn't believe youth crime is on the rise as much as his police service's ability to detect it.

"In York Region, 99 per cent of our youth are not involved in any criminal activity at all," he said. "It's just a small number of youths causing the problems."

The number of impaired driving charges was up as well, from 459 in

the first half of 2005 to 470 in the same period this year, proving the don't drink and drive message is still failing to reach some.

Population increases actually drove the drinking and driving rate down across York, but Chief La Barge is still not satisfied.

"Even one impaired driving charge is one too many," he said, adding police will continue to work with the community to send the message drinking and driving comes with serious consequences.

Despite increases in certain crimes, Chief La Barge maintains York is a safe community and many of the six-month statistics back

that up.

There was a record number of homicides in 2004, including nine in the first half of the year, but only four were recorded from January to June 2005.

The number of sexual assaults was down from 221 to 213 and 960 vehicles were stolen down from 1,111 during the first half of last year.

The community may also be more interested in helping solve crime.

Crime Stoppers of York Region received 653 between January and June 2005 compared to 566 during the same period last year.

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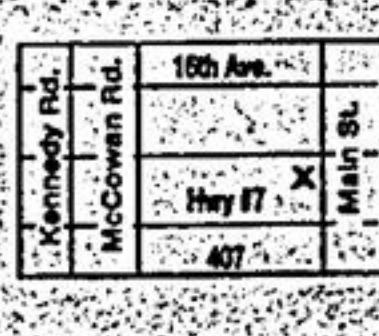
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