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# Most youths law-abiding: police officer

From page 1.

A few days earlier, a student was attacked by a machete-wielding gang following night classes at the school.

Two young men were stabbed outside a Richmond Hill plaza last weekend and in the summer of 2004 Newmarket's Michael Thornhill was stabbed to death outside a Davis Drive Tim Hortons.

A 16-year-old and an 18-year-old from Newmarket are awaiting trial in connection with his murder.

Any level of violence and use of weapons is reason for police to be concerned, said York Regional Police Insp. Paul Pederson, the officer in charge of the force's community services division and youth programs.

But while it's reasonable to believe more knives could lead to an increase in guns, Insp. Pederson does not

believe there is always a direct connection.

Nor does he think there are necessarily more people using weapons in York right now.

"The rate of weapons related crime is not going up significantly or at an alarming rate," he said.

"Do we see more of it? Yes, but the region has grown by 40,000 people, so we see more of everything."

Police statistics show youth crime

was up 18.7 per cent during the first six months of 2005.

But Insp. Pederson believes that says more about cops' success rate in combating youth crime than an increase in youth crime itself.

"We know who is responsible for these crimes and I can tell you all our kids aren't out there committing them," he said.

"The majority of our kids are law-abiding citizens."

So far, the region has skirted rampant shootings. Education is the key to making sure Toronto's experience isn't mirrored in York, Mr. Auty said.

**'There's no doubt we are seeing kids using weapons and the schools are more dangerous than they have ever been. If what you see is stabbings in York Region right now, it is going to escalate and can at any time.'**

Stuart Auty  
Canadian Safe School Network

"And it's never too early to start," he said.

The Canadian Safe School Network has trained a number of local educators on how to deal with violence in schools and York Regional Police have taken a proactive approach by instituting education and school liaison programs aimed at teaching kids the difference between right and wrong.

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