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 The Economist/Sun-Tribune

Stabbing hoax leads to criminal charges

BY JEFF MITCHELL
 Metroland Staff

Criminal charges have been laid against a man accused of perpetrating a hoax that had police searching for hours in York and Durham regions for a stabbing victim who didn't exist.

Thousands of dollars in staffing costs and resources were wasted as numerous Durham officers, backed up by canine units and a helicopter from neighbouring York Region, converged on a rural area near the hamlet of Goodwood in response to an emergency call from a man who claimed to have been stabbed, police said.

Goodwood is in Uxbridge Township, 10 minutes northeast of Stouffville.

"It was four to five hours," Det. Ron

Kapuscinski said of police work put into the July 9 incident.

The search for the fictitious victim tied up cops patrolling north Durham and saw officers from neighbouring Whitby placed on standby to cover any other calls that came in during the incident, Det. Kapuscinski said.

The incident began at 10:30 p.m. July 9 when a man called 911 and told a dispatcher he was fleeing from assailants who had stabbed him in the stomach and chest.

SEARCH NEAR STOUFFVILLE

In two calls to 911 the man said he'd stolen a phone from his abductors and was hiding in a cornfield.

Police responded by sending numerous officers to the area and dispatching a canine unit.

Assistance was provided by York police, whose helicopter patrolled the skies near Stouffville as the search continued.

An ambulance was also placed on standby.

The search was eventually called off but the investigation wasn't, Det. Kapuscinski said. Cops traced the call to a Goodwood man.

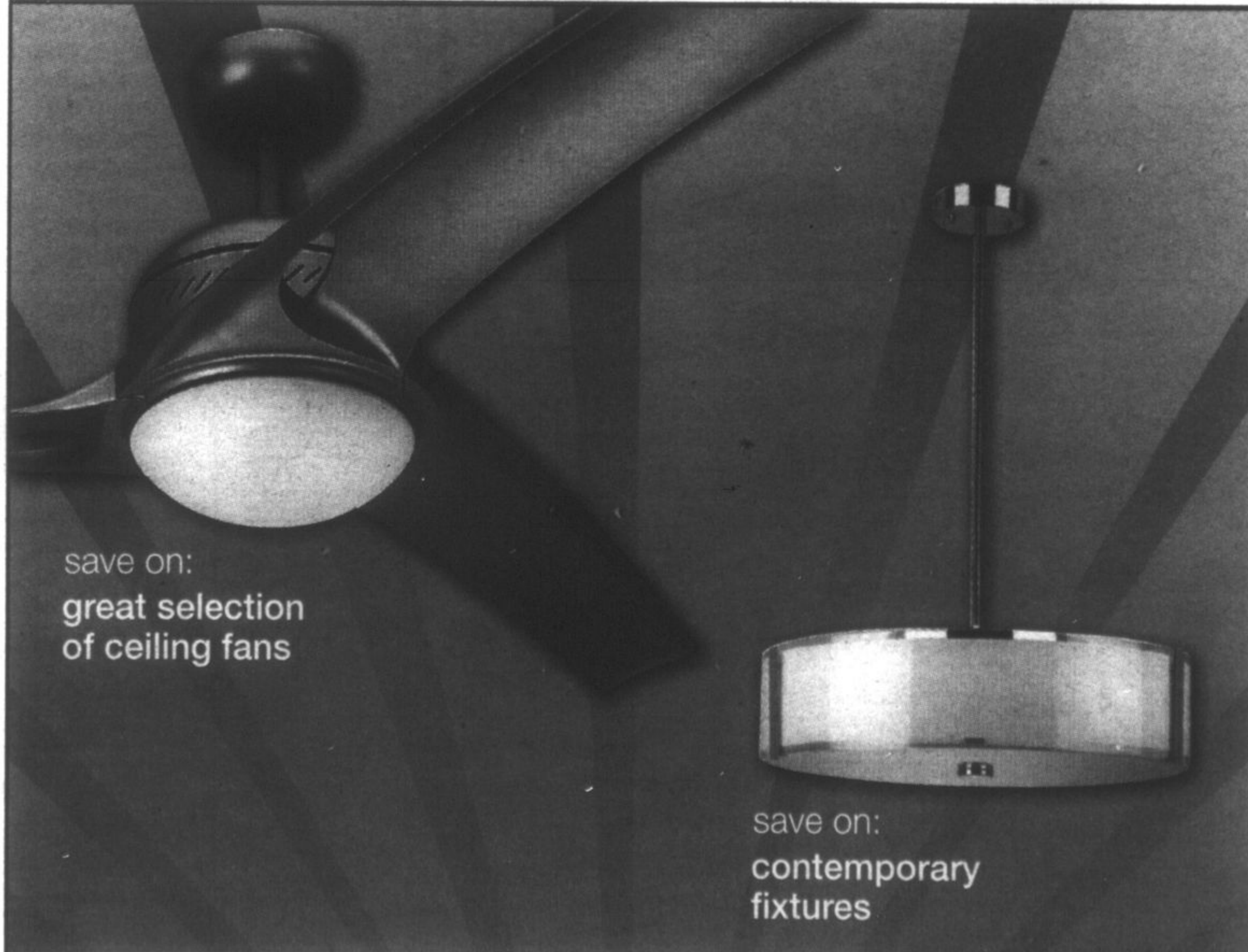
After a 12-day investigation police identified a suspect and charged him for making a false report.

A 26-year-old man is charged with public mischief. He's also charged with theft and possession of stolen property in relation to a phone police allege was stolen.

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