

PUBLIC SAFETY: Youth charges down, sex offences up

York crime rate drops 5.4% in 2012

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Crime statistics usually take swings up and down, York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe said, motioning with his hand.

This year is no different, with a number of key categories falling to the lowest level in five years, according to the force's 2012 statistical report, which was released last week.

While there were spikes in some categories, including sex crimes, the overall trend of the report, released at the police services board meeting, was downward.

The report compares figures year-to-year as well and details five-year trends.

Overall, the region's crime rate is down 5.4-per-cent.

Some of the most dramatic drops include youth crime, falling by 3.9 per cent since 2011; robberies, tumbling 11.5 per cent and assaults, down 4.8 per cent.

Crimes against property and fatal collisions also dipped, falling by 2.9 and 7.1 per cent respectively.

What makes the drugs, assaults, robbery, crime against property and fatal collision charges even more noteworthy is that they not only fell from 2011, but are below 2008 levels, despite a steadily growing population.

"We have invested heavily in our youth," Chief Jolliffe said. "This is the proactive piece of the business. It may be labour intensive, but it pays off."

"You may have a national trend of crime

falling, but you also have a region growing by 23,000 last year alone."

Other noteworthy numbers include traffic violations, which fell 20.6 per cent from 2008, but rose 7.5 per cent from 2011 and drug offences, which fell 8.6 per cent year to year.

"We've sent strong messages to indoor marijuana grow-ops and we've had some impacts there," he said.

And while the number of traffic violations rose, it was not nearly as quickly as the number of cars on the road, traffic bureau Staff Sgt. Brad Bulmer said.

"Our region is growing, but that's not necessarily being reflected in enforcement statistics," he said.

However, the annual report also raises some red flags, showing sexual violence, which includes a range of sex crimes such as sex assault with a weapon to luring a child with a computer, rose 16.2 per cent since 2011 and 21 per cent from 2009 levels.

Meanwhile public morals violations, including prostitution, gaming and betting and child pornography, also rose from 135 in 2008 to 216 in 2012.

"There's no question we're seeing a changing nature of our business that's taking us through computer transactions — child pornography is always a concern and investigating it is always challenging," Chief Jolliffe said. "Sometimes our investigators are months on the trail of this stuff."

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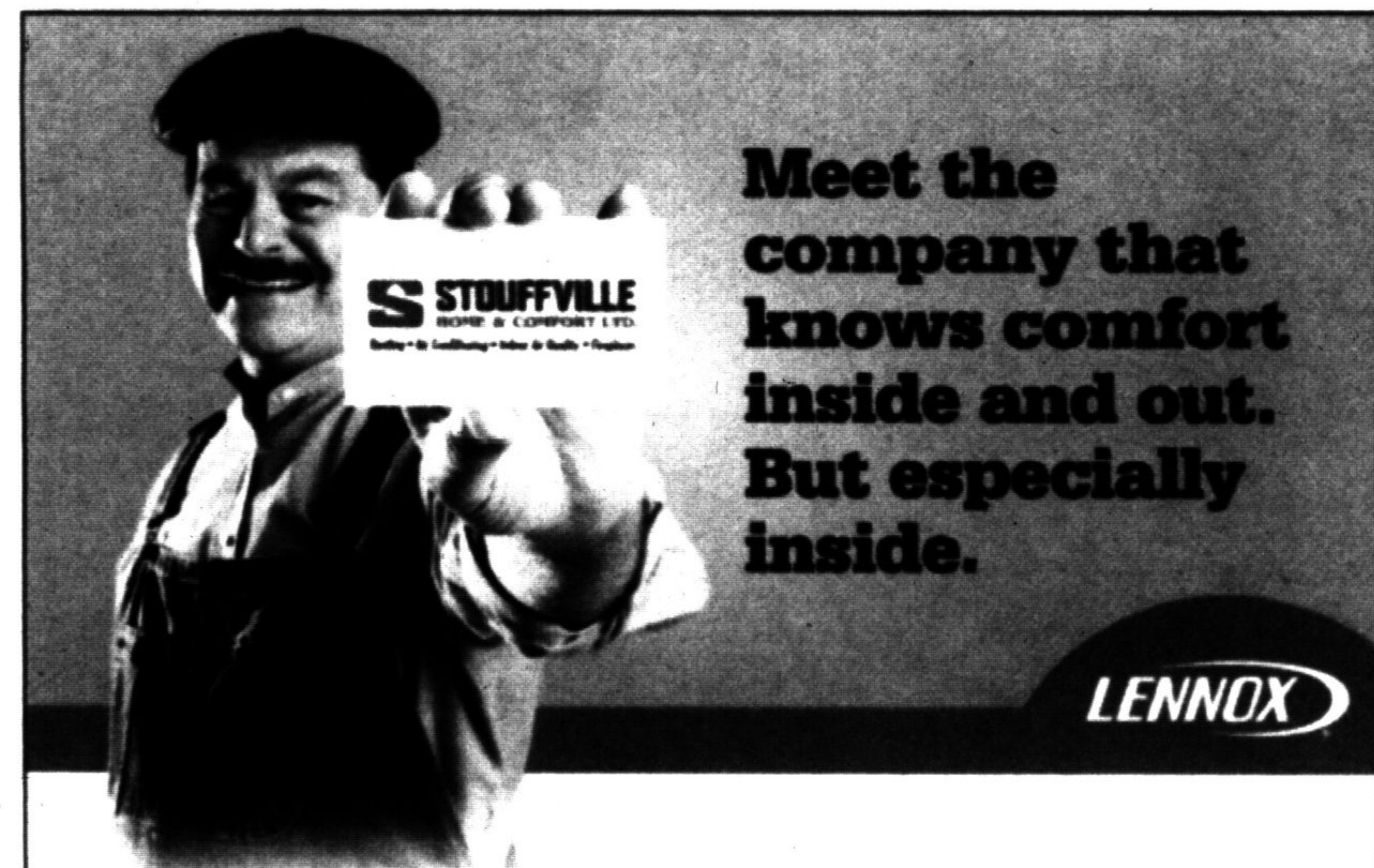
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