

Overall crime decreasing in Pickering: police

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December 17, 2012

PICKERING -- While overall crime rates are falling in Pickering, street-level robberies remain an issue for Durham police.

Durham Regional Police Inspector Jamie Grant laid out the year in crime for Pickering councillors during a council meeting Dec. 10.

Two of the main issues locally were motor vehicle collisions and street-level robberies, which Insp. Grant said have been an "ongoing problem" for several years.

"Pickering and Ajax have always had a more significant number of street-level robberies than the rest of the region, just historically it's been an issue," Insp. Grant explained, noting street robberies usually consist of a victim being accosted face-to-face for items such as cellphones or iPods.

"Pickering, however, is doing much better than Ajax in terms of theft with a violent component," he continued, noting police coupled an education component and special funding for a street-level robbery reduction initiative to reduce incidents by 15 per cent in 2012.

Another focus area was collisions, since 16 of the top 20 intersections for accidents are located in Ajax and Pickering. Police goals included reducing motor vehicle collisions by six per cent and collisions involving alcohol by eight per cent.

"The first thing we focused on is roadway safety because it's the No. 1 complaint I get," Insp. Grant explained

He outlined a series of efforts taken to improve safety, including reviewing and adjusting signals at problem intersections to clear out traffic by giving longer left-turn signals or other adjustments, RIDE programs, a media campaign, targeted enforcement and Road Watch programs, where citizens report aggressive or dangerous driving.

"Pickering and Ajax have one of the most successful Road Watch programs in the area, and with targeted enforcement we gave out more than 8,000 tickets in Pickering," Insp. Grant said.

As a result, motor vehicle collisions were reduced by just under six per cent, and police exceeded their goal on collisions involving alcohol with a reduction of 64 per cent.

Other police initiatives throughout the year included senior education programs to make elderly residents aware of fraud dangers and programs to reduce break and enters and overall thefts, including thefts from vehicles.

"Overall Pickering is a very safe community, we don't really have any outstanding concerns and I can assure you it's a safe place to work, play and live," Insp. Grant said.

"We have had a lot of success working with different groups and organizations within the community to make it that way, so it's not just about what the police are doing, everyone can contribute."

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