



Violent crime stats continue to decline in Durham Region: report

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DURHAM -- Violent crime continues to trend downward in Durham Region, according to statistics presented to the Police Services Board Monday.

But Durham police Chief Paul Martin cautioned board members against reading too much into the stats, which reflect calls for service recorded during the first three months of 2015.

Numbers "fluctuate radically from one quarter to the next," the chief noted.

"It's a barometer to make sure we're applying our resources to the proper areas," Chief Martin said of the quarterly report. "We are going to pay attention to it as an organization, but it's a little difficult to say the sky is falling until we approach the rest of the year."

Year to date stats contained in the April 13 report indicate that Durham cops have investigated 980 violent crimes, down from 1,017 during the first three months of 2014 and a significant drop from the same period in 2011, when 1,158 such incidents were investigated.

A breakdown on the violent crime stats reveals that while street-level robberies were down 31 per cent (or 13 incidents) during the quarter, sexual assaults were up 47 per cent (29 cases). The number of reported assaults, at 432, is consistent with quarterly stats in 2014 but lower than the five-year average, while commercial robberies are up over 2014 but remain consistent with previous years.

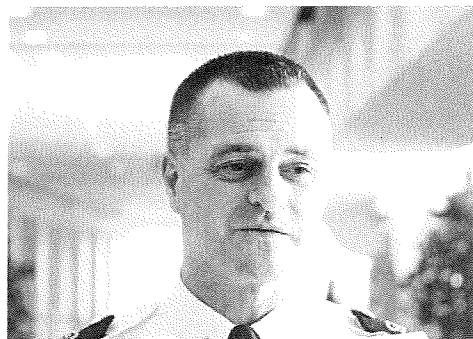
Property crime continues to be a leading issue, with 2,494 incidents reported in the first three months of 2015 (2 per cent higher than in 2014), but still continues to trend downward over the five-year period cited in the report.

Identity theft, shoplifting, break and enters and thefts from vehicles were all on the rise during the period studied.

Among other Criminal Code violations, there was an increase of eight child pornography cases, a jump of 57 per cent over the first quarter last year, while prostitution charges were virtually nil -- 62 fewer than in the first quarter of 2014 -- the result of legislative changes, the report indicates.

The weighted clearance rate during the first quarter of 2015 is reported at 43.9, the lowest of the past five years, the report notes. The statistic measures a service's efficiency in clearing the most serious crimes, either through arrest or alternative avenues.

Jeff Mitchell is the justice reporter for Metroland Media Group in Durham Region, Ontario.



DURHAM -- Paul Martin is the Durham Regional Police chief.