

Violent crime down in Durham again

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DURHAM -- Incidents of violent crime continue to decrease, according to statistics compiled by Durham police.

Police investigated 1,015 crimes against persons in the first three months of 2014, a 15-per cent decrease compared to the same time period last year, when 1,199 incidents were reported, according to a report received Monday by the Durham Police Services board.

Crimes of violence including robbery -- down 31 per cent -- and assault (21 per cent) reflect the downward trend, the report said. Chief Mike Ewles said that while crime stats are down across the nation, the trend is especially evident in Durham Region.

"Durham's rates are decreasing at a greater rate than the provincial or national numbers," he said.

Calls for service declined by about one per cent over the first three months of 2014 -- that's 253 fewer calls than in early 2013 -- but officers dealt with a higher number of emergency calls including no voice contact calls, which can be generated inadvertently by cellphones in so-called "pocket dialling" incidents.

Efforts are made to contact cellphone customers when such incidents occur but when there's no response police must respond, board members heard.

Also on the rise were tickets issued for distracted driving, a reflection of a commitment by Durham police to combat cellphone use by drivers, the chief said.

"It's been broadly communicated to our offices and the community," Chief Ewles said. "We are going to maintain our focus."



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