You want the truth?

FOI success stories

TORONTO STAR
A valuable tool

• Success stories and the ideas behind them
• What is accessible?
• How do I make a request?
• Navigating the access systems
• Municipal request for crime hot spots

• Cost: $25

• Length: 5 months

• Why? Heard about it through a police source, kept secret out of fear of stigmatizing areas
Hottest of the hot spots

The Toronto Police Service constantly monitors crime rates across the city. Areas with high concentrations of crime are called “hot spots.” This chart shows how much police activity centres on Sherbourne and Dundas. The following data was obtained by the Star through a freedom of information request.

**WORST INTERSECTIONS FOR SHOOTINGS**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Rogers and Keele</td>
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<td>Weston and Lawrence</td>
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<td>Dufferin and Eglington</td>
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<td>Neilson and Sheppard</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Eglington and Midland</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Makham and Eglington</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Queen and Dufferin</td>
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**WORST INTERSECTIONS FOR ROBBERIES**

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<td>Rogers and Keele</td>
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<td>Neilson and Sheppard</td>
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<td>Jane and Wilson</td>
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<td>Makham and Eglington</td>
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**WORST INTERSECTIONS FOR VIOLENT CALLS FOR SERVICE**

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<td>Rogers and Keele</td>
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<td>Makham and Eglington</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Neilson and Sheppard</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
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</table>

SOURCE: Toronto Police Service

**Includes events such as: assaults, sex attacks, person with a gun or knife**

TORONTO STAR GRAPHIC
- Federal request
- Cost: $5
- Length: Few months
- Why: Tipped by internal defence department committee minutes
- Provincial request
- Cost: ~$200
- Length: 3 months
- Why: Folo to series
• Provincial request

• Cost: $14,000, reduced to $150

• Length: 2 years

• Why: Death of disabled hydro worker in black out

• Results: Death rebate revoked, compensation system reviewed, real changes
Were Haitian orphans photo-op victims?

Critics say children destined for Quebec rerouted unnecessarily

RICHARD J. BRENNAN
OTTAWA BUREAU

Haitian orphans destined for Quebec, many of them cold and exhausted, were rerouted through Ottawa for what critics say was nothing more than a photo-op for the Harper government.

The Star has learned from government documents obtained through the Access to Information Act that they were originally supposed to go to Montreal and to other destinations in Canada after that.

Haiti was devastated by an earthquake on Jan. 12 and many children were left homeless and alone. The government was under a great deal of pressure to speed up existing requests for adoptions by Canadian parents.

“Most are destined to Quebec but some to other regions,” wrote Albert Deschamps, director general, Quebec region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, on Jan. 21.

“The plan is that (they) will most likely arrive at Dorval and final destination flight departing soon after.”

However, when they arrived three days later it was in Ottawa, not Montreal’s Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport.

ORPHANS continued on A9
• 10 municipal FOIs, one still under appeal

• Cost: $125 (10x$5, plus 3 $25 appeals)

• Length: 6 weeks on avg.

• Why: Beat reporter’s experience and a reporter’s observations, anecdotal evidence. Data shows they were right.

STAR EXCLUSIVE

Rich schools get richer as private cash floods system

First school-by-school look at fundraising in GTA raises alarm about inequality in our classrooms

PATTY WINSAR
AND KRISTIN RUSHOWY
STAFF REPORTERS

Two public and two Catholic high schools in Greater Toronto are bringing in more than a million dollars a year through student fees, private revenue and fundraising. Cafeterias and vending machines
Accused colonel kept tabs on police probe

Email messages obtained by the Star include condolences to the family of alleged victim

ALLAN WOODS
OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA—Word of Cpl. Marie-France Comeau’s murder arrived in her alleged killer’s inbox at 12:13 a.m. on Nov. 26, 2009.

The message was marked “significant occurrence” and kicked off a stream of messages that would keep Col. Russ Williams, her commander at Canadian Forces Base Trenton in eastern Ontario, abreast of the unfolding police probe, one that would lead months later to his stunning arrest.

The commanding officer of Comeau’s squadron gave Williams the first update from Ontario Provin-
cial Police investigators at 1:13 a.m.: “they are classifying the death as ‘suspicious.’”

Williams, the top airman at the country’s most important military hub, chimed in from his Blackberry at 6:41 a.m., acknowledging that he was aware of the incident.

“I’ll catch up when I get in, if there is additional information,” he wrote.

He closed with his signature greeting, contained in almost all of more than 100 pages of emails obtained by the Toronto Star.

“Take care, Russ Williams.”

TRENTON continued on A14
Dear

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the men and women of 8 Wing Trenton to express my sincere condolences on the tragic death of your

Please let me know whether there is anything I can do to help you during this very difficult time. You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers.

With our deepest sympathy,

D.R. Williams
Colonel
Wing Commander
Municipal request, with an immediate folo request for details on specific missing weapons

- Cost: $5
- Length: 5 months & 1 month
- Why: I had a dream
- Municipal request
- Cost: $5
- Length: 30 days
- Why: Riff on news stories on texting drivers

**STAR EXCLUSIVE**

**TTC riders ramp up driving complaints**

Transit drivers caught playing Sudoku, texting and checking Facebook

**AMY DEMPSEY**

STAFF REPORTER

The Toronto Transit Commission is dealing with a surge in complaints from fed-up customers accusing drivers of talking, texting and even working on Sudoku puzz...
BIN LADEN DEAD

Al Qaeda founder, 9/11 mastermind killed in ‘targeted assault’ by U.S. on Pakistan mansion

A man has been arrested in the 9/11 mastermind, the United States has confirmed.

The death of Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind the attacks, has been confirmed by the United States. Bin Laden was killed in a military operation in Pakistan.

Dosens of TTC staff punished for distracted driving

Drivers suspended from duty, issued final warning letters upon return to work. 

SNEAK PLAY

Why the act of steering a vehicle is considered a violation of the law. 

FULL INDEX PAGE A2
Dozens of TTC staff punished for distracted driving

STAR EXCLUSIVE  Drivers suspended from duty, issued final warning letters upon return to work

AMY DEMPSEY  STAFF REPORTER

The Toronto Transit Commission launched more than 70 investigations in a winter crackdown on distracted driving that saw operators punished for using cellphones, listening to iPods and reading newspapers behind the wheel.

Facing a surge in complaints from exasperated customers, the commission suspended 27 drivers from their jobs in February and the first week of March, TTC documents reveal.

All but one of the suspended drivers got their jobs back following investigations by TTC officials, the documents show.

Most had their records wiped clean and lost wages returned, but saw a “final notice letter” slipped in their personnel file — meaning those who reoffend will be fired immediately.

One operator was terminated and no longer works for the commission. Others faced varying levels of discipline not specified in the documents.

TTC continued on A15
• Municipal request
• Cost: $200
• Length: 2 months
• Why: Reporter an irritated rider

Crude, rude TTC staff top list of complaints

Dreadful lack of people skills, not delays or fare disputes, main concern for commuters

ROBYN DOOLITTLE
URBAN AFFAIRS BUREAU

A driver who refuses to move the bus because a baby is crying on board. A streetcar operator referred to by at least one rider as the “Blonde Dragon.” A toll collector who calls a customer “brain dead” when asked for change.

On Monday, the TTC released

WHAT THEY SAID

From sexual harassment to rude gestures, TTC riders allege a shocking litany of complaints. One female rider’s story:

“For the past 17 years this particular bus driver has been trying to get a date with me. He gives me his
• Municipal request
• Cost: $5
• Length: 1 month
• Why: Because it was secret

Mayor’s ‘secret’ schedule revealed

While reporters left guessing, Rob Ford’s packed itineraries include ethnic, arts groups

DANIEL DALE
URBAN AFFAIRS REPORTER

Mayor Rob Ford quipped in February that “it’s pretty hard to hide 300 pounds of fun.” Which may be true, but Ford does a pretty good job of it. Because he has treated his schedule as a “closely held secret,” to use the words of the
• Requests at three levels of government

• Cost: ~$2,000

• Length: 2 years

• Why: Daddy reporter discovers there's no inspection system for daycares
Federal request

Cost: $5

Length: 30 days

Why: Keeping current on current events, act fast

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A chorus of emails saved our anthem

Messages to Harper revealed anger over proposed lyric changes

BRUCE CAMPBELL-SMITH
OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA—“Ludicrous, ridiculous and idiotic” were just a few of a barrage of angry comments directed to Stephen Harper from everyday Canadians after his government opened the door to changing the lyrics of “O Canada,” documents reveal.

Reaction to the Conservatives’ surprise move was fast, furious and even vitriolic as citizens vented their unhappiness with the idea of making the anthem gender neutral, with some denouncing it as the “dumbest idea ever.”

“Is your Government NUTS?” wrote one person, summed up the sentiments of many who sent notes to Harper’s office.

In an email message after message, Canadians used words like “appalled” and “outraged” and many warned Harper he would pay a price in the polls for his “dumb” proposal.

“Don’t you dare mess with O Canada,” wrote one Canadian.

“Believe me, my wife and I will remember this when... you call an election,” the writer continued.

“Should your office change the lyrics, you are going to upset many, many Canadians... It is an outrage to change the lyrics,” said another.

“LEAVE O CANADA ALONE,” wrote one Canadian.

Harper surprised many, including some apparently even in his own Conservative caucus, with the proposal to ask Parliament to examine the “original gender-neutral” wording of “O Canada.”

At stake was the question whether the phrase “in all thy sons command” should be changed to “though dost in us command,” the wording from the original 1908 version.

It was an idea floated in the March 3, 2010, Speech from the Throne. And while the speech talked about many government initiatives, from law and order to fighting the recession, it was the anthem that emerged as the talking point — and the lightning rod.

Using access to information legislation, the Toronto Star got copies of all messages to the Prime Minister’s office on March 4, 2010, the day after the change was proposed.

The reaction was centred on one topic only.

“Mister PM... What’s with screwing around with the National anthem?... KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BALL!!!” wrote one Canadian.

Another urged Harper not to waste his time on “such a trivial issue. The country will not fall apart because it says ‘thou sons command.’ It will however fall apart if we do not do something about job creation, our deficit, our health care system,” the email read.

Many questioned why the Conservatives would raise the idea of tinkering with the anthem, just days after Canada’s impressive performance at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, which stoked national pride and had many singing “O Canada.”

There was also a nasty tone from some of the senders, who blamed “feminists” or “immigrants” for the possible change.

“I implore you not to cave to the ‘sensitivities’ of a handful of insecure women. Why don’t we just hum the anthem, that way we only risk offending the musically gifted,” said one email.

“Stop bowing down to minority groups,” wrote one Canadian. “Why are we as a nation continually changing our heritage to satisfy minorities?”

The Prime Minister’s office gave a polite response to the emails, saying their statements would be “carefully reviewed.”

The outpouring of angry opinion, a taste of the reaction that apparently flooded into Conservative MPs’ offices as well, gives a hint at why the government abruptly scrapped its promised review of the anthem just two days later.
Federal request

Cost: $5

Length: 6 months

Why: Following the news, being persistent. A secret review surfaces

Boarding passes a security weakness

Airports could do more to guard against imposters, review finds

BRUCE CAMPION-SMITH
OTTAWA BUREAU CHIEF

OTTAWA—Fraudulent or duplicated boarding passes could be used by imposters to get onboard aircraft at Canadian airports, a potential weakness that could be exploited for “attacks,” a government review says.

Transport Canada is urging the
• Provincial request
• Cost: $40
• Length: Year (appealed)
• Why: Because people like porn, and companies monitor employees
• Tip: Don’t give up
• Outcome: Data now released quarterly
Municipal request

Cost: $3K, negotiated down to $350

Length: 6 months

Why: Food poisoning that left Rob “praying to die.”

Result: Canada’s first public restaurant safety system

Signs of Success

DineSafe cuts rate of sickness

Food-related illness cases have plunged 30% since Star exposed violations in city’s eateries

ROBERT CRIBB
STAFF REPORTER

Cases of food-borne illness began to fall almost immediately after Toronto began making restaurant inspection results public in 2001. Now, eight years after the city launched the DineSafe program that publishes inspection results online and in restaurant windows, cases of individual food-borne illnesses in Toronto have dropped 30 per cent, says a Toronto Public

MANY CASES BUT FEW OFFICIALLY RECORDED

1 in 6 people suffers food-borne illness, but fewer than 1 per cent of cases are officially recorded.
• Provincial request
• Cost: $150
• Time: 3 months
• Why? Following up on previous stories

**Sickening numbers**

**ONE IN SIX** Toronto residents fall ill every year because of tainted food. That’s **437,000** people, according to first-of-its-kind research obtained by the Star. And up to **40 PER CENT** of cases are caused by bacteria transferred by food handlers who work sick because they need money.

Patrons dine on a patio yesterday. A Toronto Public Health report says one in six Toronto residents fall ill every year from food laced with bacteria.

**ROBERT CRIBB**

One in six Toronto residents — **437,000** each year — is sickened by food laced with bacteria, such as salmonella and listeria, according to a groundbreaking study of food-borne illness in the city. The results, triggered by weaknesses in the country’s food safety system, represent about **$500 million** a year in health-care costs and lost productivity, says a report from Toronto Public Health obtained by the

**A RAY OF LIGHT ON FOOD SAFETY**

There are some promising signs amid the bad news on food safety. Cases of individual food-borne illnesses in Toronto have declined 30 per cent after the city launched the OneSafe program in 2001. That initiative was introduced after the Star’s “Dirty Dining” investigation, which found hundreds of restaurants had serious violations — from cockroach infestations to filthy preparation areas.

Many cities release restaurant reports why can’t Toronto be named

“Shoddy caterers to be named”

Very scary bakery shut down

We looked at existing research about the sources of under-reporting, how many get sick but don’t go to the doctors, how many don’t find the bag the patient has, and you can go back and calculate, estimating how many cases we’re losing at each step.”

Among its recommendations, the report calls for the province to consider compensating food
Federal request for raw electronic data

Cost: $0

Length: 4 years

Why: Folo to a Hamilton airport story by city hall reporter, paper reports

Results: Daily release of data
• Dozens of provincial requests

• Cost: $300

• Length: 3 months

• Inspiration: Ryerson partnership

• Results: Caused a stir during election, vows to clamp down

Cash for marks gets kids into university

Low-performing students are “earning” high marks at private schools, known as “credit mills.” The result? Students with lower but legitimate marks are turned away from university, while poorly prepared students gain entry — and then fail.
Federal and provincial, CPIC and inmate address data

Cost: $100 (initial CPIC estimate: $1.6 million)

Length: 5 years

Why: Tory approach to crime and punishment
"If you wish to proceed with the processing of your request, forward a deposit of $1,599,840.00 by cheque or money order payable to the Receiver General of Canada," read the letter from the RCMP's access to information co-ordinator.

And, "should you wish to continue your request, please note that there are no guarantees that any part of the information will be released."
When good people are swept up with the bad

Seventeen years ago, a Star investigation into race, policing, and crime in Toronto was met with denials of racial bias. Today, police across the country readily acknowledge bias is a factor and the Toronto Police Service is setting an example for other services and institutions with its diversity policy. Yet, race still matters. Today, using never-before-released data, the Star launches a series highlighting the Toronto police practice of documenting people in mostly non-criminal encounters. In an uneasy trade-off for safer streets, both “good” and “bad” end up in a growing database. Young black men, more than any other group, are most likely to be stopped and documented. Jim Rankin reports.
Police documented hundreds on G20 weekend

JIM RANKIN
STAFF REPORTER

Hundreds of citizens were documented by police in mostly non-criminal encounters during last year’s G20 summit — and their names and personal details still live on in an internal police database.

Over three days, more than 500 people were stopped, questioned and documented by Toronto police officers in key G20 patrol areas downtown and near a temporary jail location, according to a Toronto Star analysis of police contact card data obtained in a freedom of information request.

Police use the database as an investigative tool to connect people, places and times. For example, in the case of a homicide, detectives can enter a victim’s name and see who they were in contact with in the past — and where and when.

The level of “carding” was unusually high during the summit, which could be expected given the police presence. On an average day in those areas in 2008, police documented 76 people, according to baseline data previously obtained by the Star. But from June 25 to 27, 2010 — the summit weekend — the daily average was 186.

That’s an increase of 150 percent.

Sunday was the busiest day of the weekend; 235 people were carded.

White men were most often stopped, according to the data. This came as little surprise to anyone who was out on the streets of downtown Toronto that weekend.

G20 continued on G18

Documenting citizens and key G20 moments

Toronto police took down names and other personal details of citizens they stopped, questioned and, in many cases, searched during the G20 summit — and then let go without arrest.

Data obtained by the Toronto Star shows who was stopped, where and when in five key patrol areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE DOCUMENTED BY POLICE</th>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<th>HOUR</th>
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Friday, June 25

Toronto police tend to document more people in the evening, mostly in at-risk neighbourhoods and the Entertainment District. This is not the case in key G20 patrol zones, where police stop, question and document people during day/night hours.

Saturday, June 26

A mass, peaceful protest is marred when small numbers of protesters engage in vandalism. Police document people prior to the beginning of the march and pick up again in the evening. During the march and periods of violent few people are documented.

Sunday, June 27

Police are out throughout the downtown core questioning and searching citizens, most notably young men wearing black. Particular attention is focused on the area around the Bay St. bus terminal and Queen’s Park.

This is the heaviest day of police documenting of citizens in mostly non-criminal encounters.
Known to police

Toronto officers stop, question and document hundreds of thousands each year. Young men of colour are ‘carded’ in numbers far above their population.

Black and white: A difference in documentation

Police stop and document a higher proportion of black people than white people in each of the city’s 72 patrol areas. On average, blacks are 3.2 times more likely to be documented than whites, but in predominantly white, more affluent neighbourhoods that likelihood increases.

Increased likelihood of being stopped and documented by police if you’re black, compared to white:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Number of Zones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 in less than 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 in less than 5</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>5 in less than 10</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>50 in less than 100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a cramped office in the Weston-Mt. Dennis neighbourhood, this question is put to young men taking part in a program designed to keep them from the trouble that comes with guns, guns and drugs.

Do you think, police have stopped, questioned and documented every young man of colour in this neighbourhood?

To answer, the young men agree that is the case in their part of town, one of 13 designated by the city as priority districts, and one where there has been a spate of shootings.

“I am sure of it,” says Amirah Arajah, 20, a case manager and employment counselor with Prevention Intervention Toronto, the federally funded pilot project operating in this office off the lobby of an apartment building. The project closed at the end of March.

“At least once,” continues Arajah, who grew up in Malvern, another of the city’s at-risk neighbourhoods, and has worked with youth in Weston-Mt. Dennis since 2007.

A blue analysis of Toronto police stop data from 2008 to mid-2011 shows that the number of young black and brown males aged 15 to 24 documented in each of the city’s 72 patrol zones is greater than the actual number of young men of colour living in those areas.

“Eating white males and those designated as ‘other’ do attract police attention, but nothing as pronounced as black and brown youth,” Toronto police Chief Bill Blair dismisses the possibility that his officers, who are encouraged to stop, question and document citizens in all areas of the city as part of regular and targeted police work, may have documented all young black and brown men in certain areas.

“I can’t imagine that that’s true,” Blair said in an interview that stretched over two hours and included two deputy chiefs. People come and go, he said, and citizens are documented in areas where they do not live, which indeed accounts for many of the carded out of certain neighbourhoods.

Blair pointed to internal police data that, unsurprisingly, show many of those stopped within patrol zones do not live within them. This, he argued, would account for much of the huge discrepancy in who is carded.

Chief Bill Blair says the police strategy is working.
One cop, five years, 6,600 cards

Is an individual officer's high rate of street checks of blacks a reason for police to be concerned?

JIM RANKIN AND PATTY WINSA
STAFF REPORTERS

ANDREW BAILEY AND HIDY NG
DATA ANALYSTS

During Officer #81499756's time with the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy unit, the first-class constable would, on a typical shift, stop, question and document about a dozen people in encounters that typically involved no arrest or charge.

As every other police officer in Toronto is expected to do, this officer filled out contact cards on the people he — and usually one or more partners — stopped.

Name, date of birth, location, physical description, the reason for the stop, which was most often "general investigational"...
It really infringes upon my safety

And after numerous times of being stopped for no reason you start to feel an infringement upon your rights, me living in a country that’s supposed to be free, democratic. I have the Charter of Rights, I’m supposed to be a free person.

You’re supposed to be enjoying liberties that other countries that hold people in detention, yet I can’t drive a car peacefully without the police pulling me over just because he feels like checking me out and to see if I have a criminal record, or if I’m bringing a probation or anything. We call that racial profiling, and whenever I say this to the cops I get rebutted.

Singh was running for the Green party in the 2018 federal election in theScarborough-Rouge River ridings when he was stopped while driving a Prius car. I was pulled by police, the police officer flipped me over and I was very upset. I’d been working very hard for the community.

Police are likelier to stop and document people with black skin than with white skin in every patrol zone across Toronto. The chances are highest in the Entertainment District, where the likelihood is 10 times higher.

Increased likelihood of being stopped and reported by police if you’re black compared to white

- Greater than 1 to less than 2 times more likely
- 2 to less than 3 times more likely
- 3 to less than 4 times more likely
- 4 to less than 5 times more likely
- 5 to 10 times more likely
- No data

Bill Blair

He’s suggesting that there’s some sort of ineradicable link between contact carding and public safety. My response to Bill Blair is, I would ask him, what’s the connection between entering me in a database as being “clean shaven” on the one hand, and the enhancement of public safety, on the other hand?

It’s laughable to suggest that knowing I’m clean shaven is somehow going to enhance public safety. That making an erroneous assessment of my weight is somehow going to enhance public safety. I’m listed as 130 pounds, I’m actually 130. Perhaps I should be flattered.

And also there’s a notification about clothing, which of course is intrinsically transitory...
• Provincial and municipal requests

• Couple of appeals, judicial review, an order

• Cost: $25

• Length: Years

Troubling DNA delay in Williams murder case

Getting result faster might not have stopped another killing, but could have linked crimes

Days before that upload, Williams unleashed the same violence on another neighbour, Laurie Massicotte, though no useful DNA sample was found. Massicotte lived on Williams’ dead-end street called Cozy Cove Lane.

In mid-September 2009, air force colonel Russell Williams broke into a neighbour’s home in the village of Tweed. He beat, blindfolded and sexually assaulted a young woman as her 8-week-old daughter slept in another room. When police arrived, a DNA sample was lifted from behind the woman’s neck. It took less than two weeks for the Centre of Forensic Sciences in Toronto to identify a DNA profile and upload it to the RCMP’s National DNA Data Bank.

Convicted killer Russell Williams was commander at CFB Trenton.

DNA continued on A21
• Eight provincial requests and counting

• Couple of appeals

• Cost: $6,000

• Length: Ongoing
Kids in Ontario subject to vastly different treatment depending on the location and the agency

SANDRO CONTENTA, JIM RANKIN AND LAURIE MONSEBRAATEN
STAFF REPORTERS
ANDREW BAILEY AND HIDY NG
DATA ANALYSTS

An unprecedented analysis of data from Ontario’s children’s aid societies has revealed striking differences in the way vulnerable youth are treated across the province.

Whether children are placed with relatives or in group homes, how likely they are to rejoin their families after being placed in care, and even whether they receive regular dental checkups are all influenced by where they happen to live and which of the province’s 46 children’s aid societies takes them into care.

The stark differences are revealed in a Toronto Star analysis that, for the first time, compares the performance of these privately run, non-profit agencies. Drawn from budget reports and case audits, the numbers raise the veil on a secretive and unaccountable system that struggles to keep tabs on how well its youth are faring.

A child removed from a family in Toronto, for example, is more likely to end up in a group home than one from Brantford, where a much higher percentage of children are placed with kin.

CHILDREN’S AID continued on A23

>THE SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

Children’s aid societies in Ontario are private, non-profit corporations regulated by the government. In some areas, aboriginal, faith-based and secular societies share a catchment area.

23,300
Number of children and youth in care in Ontario.

7,000
Approximate number who were wards of the province, living in foster care or group homes, in 2013-14

1,000
Children on the path to becoming Crown wards in 2013-14

18
Age at which children leave care if they are not adopted
SOCIETY’S CHILDREN A SERIES

Troubling events rampant at group homes
But province failing to keep track of ‘serious occurrences’ involving vulnerable young people, Star finds

SANDRO CONTENTA, JIM RANKIN
AND LAURIE MONSEBRAATEN
STAFF REPORTERS

ANDREW BAILEY
DATA ANALYST

Several times daily in Toronto, vulnerable children and teenagers in group homes are physically restrained by staff or charged by police, or they run away. Their stories are briefly told in 1,199 Toronto reports describing “serious occurrences” filed to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services in 2013. Most involve children and youth in publicly funded, privately operated group homes.

The Star obtained the reports in a freedom of information request and compiled them according to the type of serious event that occurred — something the ministry does not do. They note everything from medication errors to emotional meltdowns to deaths.

And they shed light on the troubled lives of children placed in group or foster homes by children’s aid societies and desperate parents.

There are 3,300 children and youth in 484 group homes in Ontario, according to the ministry. Those homes, along with foster parents and children’s aid societies, generate almost 20,000 serious occurrences filed province-wide every year.

Yet the ministry does not know, for example, if physical and chemical restraints are being used more or less often over the years, or if more children are sustaining serious injuries while in care. How can practices be improved if no one is keeping province-wide track of what is going wrong?

“There’s no evidence that anybody is taking this seriously.”

KIM SNOW
RYERSON UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR AND RESEARCHER

GROUP HOMES continued on A17

Use of restraint common in group homes, A16
Reported serious occurrences in Toronto involving police, 2013

There were almost 1,200 serious occurrences in Toronto group homes in 2013. The police were involved in 460 of those incidents, resulting in 115 arrests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE AGENCY (GROUP HOMES)</th>
<th>TOTAL SERIOUS OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>ARRESTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Circle of Support (2 locations)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrabon House</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (includes foster homes)</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedar Heights Residential Living (3 locations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delisle Youth Services</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>D.L.C. Residential Services</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Metro Youth Services (2 locations)</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterphase Child &amp; Family Services (2 locations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The George Hull Centre Boys House (3 locations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Griffin Centre Mental Health Services (3 locations)</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>Hanahan Youth Services (2 locations)</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ilincks-Dellcrest Centre (2 locations)</td>
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<td>Kennedy House Youth Services (4 locations)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>LOFT Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Massey Centre for Women</td>
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<td>Oakdale Child &amp; Family Service (3 locations)</td>
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<td>Oolagen Community Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosalie Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sancta Maria House</td>
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<td>Storey Homes (4 locations)</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turning Point Youth Services (5 locations)</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youthdale Treatment Centres (4 locations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youthdale Treatment Centres (secure facility)</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>YouthLink</td>
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SOURCE: Ministry of Children and Youth Services   ANALYSIS: Toronto Star
"Having her there at the birth of my daughter is one of my favourite memories."

Candice L. Humescourt, Shelly's sister

Shelly Dene
26, Missing and Murdered

GONE
MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN

‘HE WAS ABLE TO MANIPULATE THE SITUATION’
Making a request

• First off, is there a way to avoid making a request? Try for a brown envelope.

• Do your homework.

• Carefully craft request letter.

• Keep on top of deadlines.

• Appeal bad decisions.
The request letter

- The letter is the thing
- Choose wording carefully
- Use boiler-plates as a starting point
Navigating the system

• Study the acts
• Ask for fee estimates and challenge them
• Always appeal (it’s only $25)
• Ask for help and advice from others
• Lawyers, guns and money (last resort, minus the guns)
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