



## YCJA helping to lower youth crime rates

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**RAMANDEEP FARMAHA**

Every day, a crime is happening somewhere in the GTA: shootings, drug trafficking, graffiti. Today, youths are being arrested for a variety of crimes. The major offence in Canada is still property crimes, such as vandalism, graffiti and defacing public property. Since 1992, when it peaked at 4,000 youth for every 100,000, property crimes have been on a sharp decline. In 2006, property crimes were 2,300 for every 100,000 youth.

Meanwhile, with the decrease of property crimes, murders, beatings and robberies have been on the rise. According to a StatsCan report, violent crimes were 12 per cent higher in 2006 than in 1997 in Canada. The amount of drug crimes committed by youth has drastically increased in the past decade. Drug crimes were 91 per cent higher in 2006 than in 1997 at 6,382 per 100,000 youth.

In Ontario, where schools run programs such as Reduce Abuse in Drugs (R.A.I.D.), we have the second lowest youth crime rate in Canada. For every 100,000 Ontarian youth, only 5,956 were charged from the criminal code in 2006.

To help lower other provinces' crime rates to Ontario's, the Youth Criminal Justice Act replaced the Young Offenders Act on April 1, 2003. This new act allowed for integration of troubled youth into mainstream society. The YCJA made way for the police to clearly distinguish serious crimes from meagre crimes, lowering the number of youths sent to jail.

"I believe that our youth criminal justice system must effectively hold young offenders accountable for serious crimes with meaningful consequences; instil within them a sense of responsibility for their delinquent or criminal behaviour; and give them a better opportunity for rehabilitation so that they do not re-offend," says Rob Nicholson, minister of justice and the attorney general of Canada.

Even though property crimes have drastically decreased in Canada, we still suffer greatly from gangs, drugs and violence. If Canada wants to reduce the amount of violence, we need to educate our youth about respect and tolerance within our communities.

*Ramandeep Farmaha is a Grade 8 student at Lyndwood Public.*