

Threats on Facebook to shoot GTA students, teen charged

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A teenager is facing four charges and is being held in custody overnight after messages threatening to shoot peers appeared on Facebook.

Toronto police made themselves "highly visible" in the Etobicoke high school targeted in the threat after graffiti first appeared on its walls on Nov. 29. A similar message was posted on the social networking site Facebook a day later.

"(The message was) just that the school was going to be shot up and people were going to get killed," said Det. Steve Pattison, who was part of the investigating team.

He said police allege the charged teen "hijacked" another student's account, using their Facebook wall to post the threat.

"This is an issue we want to bring to the attention of students so they will realize that we have ways to get the person who's made the threat," Pattison said, "and we will arrest and prosecute."

He said the teen would be held overnight, which was unusual for a young person, who cannot be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

"I don't know the exact reason why, it could be because of the public interest or to ensure safety of any victims," he said.

Threats of violence to young people attending Toronto high schools has recently escalated, police said, though most have proved false.

The teen is charged with threatening bodily harm, mischief to interfere with property, personation with intent and unauthorized use of a computer.