

Slight relief for some Lower Mainland cities

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Series: Stolen Lives: An in-depth look at the dangerous world of auto crime

– Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam recorded a slight dip in auto theft in the first six months of this year compared to last, from 1,233 to 1,153.

That's little joy for RCMP detachment spokesman Const. Dave Babineau.

"I don't look too much at the statistics," he says. "Even with a drop it's still a significant problem in our community. It's still right up there."

Highlighting the issue is an incident in the early hours of March 30 when Mounties spotted a stolen Chrysler Daytona. When the police cruiser put its emergency lights on the vehicle took off and a pursuit began. One of the men in the vehicle threw out a bag containing two loaded guns before the vehicle ran over a spike belt and was disabled.

ICBC figures show 870 vehicles stolen in Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam in 2000, compared to 1,340 in 2004.

– Richmond had its first bait car success last November and has seen a steady drop in auto theft since.

Police stats show 597 vehicles stolen in Richmond in the first half of 2005 compared to 816 in the same period last year -- a 27 per cent drop.

The downturn comes after a steady spiral upward.

– Burnaby has seen its auto theft rate drop from eight a day in the first half of 2004 to six a day in the first half of 2005.

Youth are central to the problem. In May and June, Mounties arrested five juveniles involved in auto theft. Among them: a 16-year-old arrested after running from a stolen van he crashed into locked gates in front of a Burnaby home. The youth was on probation at the time for other motor vehicle crimes.