

City man faces murder charge in death of his sister-in-law

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Karen Kleiss, The Edmonton Journal

EDMONTON - An Edmonton man was charged Wednesday with second-degree murder in connection with the death of his sister-in-law on Easter weekend.

Kenneth Butler, 24, is also charged with aggravated assault in connection with the severe beating of an Edmonton cab driver the same weekend.

He will undergo a 30-day psychological assessment at Alberta Hospital before entering a plea to the charges against him next month.

"It is essentially to assess his state of mind," Crown prosecutor Anne Schutte said Wednesday.

"Criminal responsibility is an issue here."

On April 4, Butler tried to visit his brother Michael at his southeast Edmonton home. Michael and his wife, Stephanie, were aware of Kenneth's violent past and called police.

Butler was arrested but released the following morning on \$300 bail. He was ordered to stay away from Michael and Stephanie's home.

One day after his release, police were called to the same area to investigate the beating of 61-year-old cab driver Pavan Chohan. Shortly after police arrived, Kenneth Butler approached officers and allegedly explained that he was somehow involved.

Police believe that Stephanie Butler was attacked and killed in her home while officers were outside investigating the assault on the cab driver.

Stephanie's parents found her body the following day.

Kenneth Butler's family later said he had a long history of violent, erratic behaviour, mental-health problems and drug addiction.

"Everyone is heartbroken -- there are no words to express how my family is feeling right now," Michael Butler said Wednesday.

"This should never have happened. My brother was let down, my wife was let down, I've been let down and there are a lot of people out there who are still being let down," Michael Butler said.

Butler is currently travelling in Ottawa and Toronto to campaign for better treatment for drug addicted and mentally ill Canadians, along with changes to the justice system.

Kenneth Butler will make his next appearance in court on June 8.

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