

Reginan suspect in Alta. murder

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CanWest News Service

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

EDMONTON -- There is nothing police officers could have done to change the night Stephanie Rae Butler was killed, Edmonton police Chief Mike Boyd said Tuesday.

"It is easy to look back in time with the information we have now, to say the officers could have or should have done something different ..." he said. "With the benefit of hindsight, which is always 20/20, we have a very different picture today."

While the victim's widower, Michael Butler, looked on, Boyd explained what officers did Friday night after being called to the Kiniski Gardens neighbourhood where a taxi driver was beaten nearly to death just up the street from the Butler home where Stephanie was found dead the next day by her father.

Former Reginan Kenneth Anthony Butler, 24, Michael's brother, has been charged in the cabbie's beating and is a suspect in Stephanie's slaying.

Boyd addressed reporters Tuesday to answer criticisms voiced by Michael Butler that police did not do enough to protect the couple from Kenneth Butler.

Fed up with his brother after years of erratic and violent behaviour, Michael called police when Kenneth tried to break into the couple's house on Wednesday, just days before Stephanie's death.

Questions have also been raised why police didn't find Stephanie the same night they investigated the assault on the cab driver.

"The responding officers did what they could with the information they had at the time," Boyd said, emphasizing no information available that night would have prevented the attack on the 25-year-old woman.

A loose timeline laid out by Boyd indicates Stephanie suffered her fatal head injuries when police officers investigating the beating were knocking on doors in the neighbourhood.

A police dog led officers close to where she lay -- to the seven-foot fence around 4204 38th St. But it would be nearly 24 hours before her

bloodied body was found inside by her father and nearly a day before the broken window used to gain access to her home was noticed.

"It is alleged that following the assault on the cab driver, the man forced his way into the home," where she was killed, Boyd said.

About 35 minutes after police began looking for the cabbie's attacker Friday night, Kenneth Butler climbed into a squad car. But Boyd said it would be another two hours, well after midnight, before officers could positively identify Kenneth Butler.

Boyd would not comment Tuesday whether any red flags were raised at the time. Just two days before he was arrested for aggravated assault, Kenneth Butler was picked up by police at the home of his brother and sister-in-law on a number of warrants.

A justice of the peace granted Kenneth Butler \$300 bail on the condition he stay away from 4204 38th St.

"When officers arrived at the scene (on Wednesday), they arrested the suspect outside of the home without incident," Boyd said.

"Given the circumstances at the home there really are no new charges that could have been laid that day."

He added that, by requesting a restraining order as part of Kenneth Butler's bail conditions, the arresting police officer went "above and beyond."

"Even with the information (about the restraining order), I'm not sure we would have had grounds to be able to go in," he said, adding no one would have been there to let officers into the Butler home.

When asked whether police would launch an internal investigation of how the weekend homicide was handled, Boyd said: "There's been no complaint from the public, and I'm looking into the details."

Kenneth Butler was in court briefly Tuesday morning on one charge of aggravated assault against 61-year-old cabbie Pavan Chohan and one count of failing to appear. He will undergo 30 days of psychological assessment at Alberta Hospital.

Boyd said charges in connection to Stephanie Butler's homicide are pending.

Michael Butler said he has not spoken to his younger brother since the

weekend arrest.

"I don't want to. I don't know if I'm that strong."

After the news conference, he stood outside police headquarters and held up pictures of his wife and of himself and younger brother as children.

"Actions speak louder than words," he said when asked about a brief conversation he had with Boyd.

Then, he said, he had to leave so he could meet with a minister to discuss funeral arrangements for Stephanie.

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