

'We were let down'

Slain woman's hubby blames justice system

By AJAY BHARDWAJ AND ELIZA BARLOW, SUN MEDIA

Wednesday, April 11, 2007



EPS Police chief Mike Boyd talks to Mike Butler, husband of murder victim Stephanie Rae Butler prior to a news conference at Police Headquarters about the police investigation around the murder. (Sun photo)

City police Chief Mike Boyd stood by the cops who failed to connect the beating death of Stephanie Rae Butler with a savage attack on a cabbie less than half a block from the house where her body was discovered.

But Butler's grieving widower remains convinced the entire system failed both victims.

"The police did f--k up, but the reason they did f--k up is that the justice system isn't supporting them. We were let down so hard, but it's not the police, it's more the government. The evil people win," Michael Butler told Sun Media yesterday.

CHIEF BACKS OFFICERS

At a press conference at police headquarters yesterday, Boyd said that under the circumstances the officers involved did everything right.

"Based on the information that I've received to date, I believe that our officers did what they could do with the information they had at that time," Boyd said.

"You must understand that the responding officers did not know who they

were looking for after the assault occurred on the cab driver. They were not able to establish his proper identity and had no way of knowing that the suspect was connected to that address.

"There's nothing, in my view, that our officers could have done to prevent the tragic loss of Ms. Butler's life or the assault on the cab driver."

The tragic sequence of events began last Wednesday when police received a call from Michael Butler stating his brother Ken was trying to get inside, Boyd said.

When a suspect was arrested, police found that the suspect was wanted for breach of probation and failure to appear, Boyd said.

Following the arrest, an officer appeared before a justice of the peace and was given a restraining order to keep the man from Butler's home.

"It is my opinion that this officer went above and beyond in requesting that condition under the circumstances at the time," Boyd said.

The suspect, Ken Butler, was released on \$300 bail.

On Friday at 10 p.m., cab driver Pavan Chohan was assaulted near 42 Avenue and 38 Street, Boyd said. Cops poured into the area and searched for his attacker.

Some 35 minutes later, a suspect in the beating of the cabbie climbed in the back of a police cruiser and waited for police to show up.

Boyd said police would have no grounds to enter the Butler home and there was no one inside who could have let them in.

Meanwhile, Michael Butler says the government needs to do more to help people ravaged by drugs.

Mike, 26, says his brother Ken started using drugs in junior high and had been on a sharp downward spiral of crack cocaine and crystal meth addiction over the last four or five years.

He said the family called the cops on Ken over and over again, only to have him released shortly after he was arrested.

"He would just drain us and drain us. He stole my mom's rings. He stole my little brother's PlayStation, all to get money for drugs. The drugs messed up his mind and there was no help for him to fix his mind."

Mike says the family tried to get help from AADAC and other agencies,

and when that failed, they bought Ken a house in Regina to put some distance between him and his family.

CAME BACK TO TOWN

But about six months after the move to Regina, Ken reappeared in Edmonton.

Mike, who says he was out of town for a basketball tournament when his wife was slain, says the cops made a mistake when they didn't check on Stephanie after arresting Ken.

Ken Butler is undergoing a 30-day psychiatric evaluation and will be back in court on May 9. No charges have been laid yet in connection with the slaying.