

Bail conditions

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Several years ago, I was watching a show on a television investigative news program that was examining life in prison for women in the Canadian penal system.

They focused on one woman during the segment. She was young ? in her 20s. She had been sentenced to 25 years to life for murder.

The thing is, she didn't kill anyone. She had been riding in a car with a small group of people in a western province when the car was pulled over for a minor traffic violation. As the police officer approached the vehicle, the driver of the car pulled out a pistol and opened fire, killing the police officer on the spot.

The car was chased down and everyone arrested. At the time, as it was explained on the show, because the incident resulted in the murder of a police officer, everyone in the vehicle was charged with the murder, including this young woman.

She claims she didn't know the driver had a gun, and had no idea he would suddenly react in a violent way like he did.

Because of her poor choice of association, she will spend a good deal of her life incarcerated.

The recent murder of a rookie police officer near Hagersville is another tragedy that claimed a life for no reason. The officer was responding to a simple ?car in the ditch? report, and probably expected to find a distressed motorist looking for help ? not a mad dog killer who ambushed the officer and murdered him in cold blood.

Two people, a man and woman, were arrested and have been charged with first degree murder.

It is assumed the shooter was the male, although that has not been confirmed, but again, I'm sure the woman who now faces the most serious charge in the judicial system, and also the most serious crime in society, probably wishes she had made a better choice when selecting a boyfriend. Her life, no doubt, is ruined.

That's four police officers murdered in Ontario since September, and police associations are now banding together to find solutions.

You can bet a primary focus of their attention will be the fact that time and time again, violent offenders are released on bail, only to commit more crimes.

Many officers have stated in past how frustrating it is to arrest someone for a violent crime, only to see them released by judges, and to see the same person back on the street committing the same crimes again.

The alleged shooter in the Hagersville murder had previously been release on bail after being arrested, and was under a number of conditions, including remaining in his residence and not possessing any firearms. He failed on both of those conditions. The shooter was also under a lifetime firearms prohibition and had already been charged with several firearms offences and assaulting a peace officer.

A warrant had been issued for his arrest and additional charged were laid after he failed to show up for a court appearance in September.

It also alleged that prior to the shooting, the suspects in this murder had robbed a citizen of their vehicle and fled scene.

Obviously, this guy shouldn't be on the streets at all. He not only didn't comply with his bail conditions, he committed more crimes

after he was let out back into society.

I don't blame the police for being angry at all. How many more times will someone have to die because the courts routinely allow violent criminals to walk out on the street after they have shown contempt for the laws of the land and society in general?

For police officers, it isn't a matter of just doing the job, it is a matter of possibly facing a situation like the one in Hagersville, where a violent person, who should be behind bars, reacts to a uniform by committing murder.

In this case, the alleged shooter certainly wasn't too bright. He was already on police radar, and they probably zeroed in on him pretty quickly after the murder, but capturing someone after the crime has been committed is little solace to the victim's family and friends.

Maybe judges should be required to attend police ride-alongs to see what they are up against.

?Okay, judge, this call is for a man holed up in a house with a rifle and scope and a hostage. He just got released yesterday. You lead the way.?

The courts may re-think releasing violent offenders so quickly if they had to face the tough situations every day themselves.