

COURTS: Markham youth convicted of stabbing two police officers won't be moved closer to home

Jailed teen denied transfer

BY LISA QUEEN
STAFF WRITER

A teenager who knifed two York Regional Police officers has failed to take responsibility for his crime and must remain in a detention centre, a judge has ruled.

The young offender, who can't be identified, had asked to be transferred to a halfway house, such as Kennedy House in Scarborough, so he could be closer to his family.

But Judge Sherrill Rogers said the youth isn't ready to leave the Syl Apps facility in Oakville.

The youth pleaded guilty to attempted murder and aggravated assault for stabbing Det. Bob Wiche and Det. Dave Kingston in the hallway of the Newmarket courthouse in June 1997.

Sentenced to the maximum three year penalty under the Young Offenders Act, the teen was ordered to spend 20 months and 15 days in Syl Apps and another year in open custody.

He has served 12 months at the detention centre. Although he was originally in maximum security, he has been moved to medium security.

Rogers said the 17-year-old and his family haven't come to grips with the seriousness of the crime he committed.

She acknowledged there was an unfortunate history that preceded the youth's attack on Wiche, who was stabbed repeatedly in the neck and back, and Kingston, whose arm was injured in the attack.

The stabbing occurred during a recess in Wiche's preliminary hearing on a manslaughter charge stemming from the fatal shooting of 16-year-old Faraz Suleman, known to the youth. The charges against Wiche were later dismissed.

Psychologist Dr. Graham Turrall said the teen was depressed and "cognitively impaired" at the time of the stabbing.

Although the teen didn't have a violent past before the stabbing, he is, however, a young offender who has committed a grievous crime.

Rogers said it is in the youth's and society's best interests he remain at Syl Apps, where he is receiving therapy.

The teen's mother did not want to discuss the judge's ruling.

But Steve Clayton, the manager of the teen's unit at Syl Apps, was pleased the young offender will remain at the facility.

"We didn't want this kid out. It would be a disservice to this kid and a disservice to society."

Clayton said the teen has just started to deal with his responsibility for the crime. He believes taking him out of the facility now would erase the progress

the young man has made.

"To move a kid who has just started the therapy is the worst thing to do to a kid."

The youth can reapply to be transferred to a halfway house in six months. Clayton said it is difficult, at this point, to predict whether the teen poses any threat to the community.

"It's an unknown. We look at him as a medium risk now, rather than a maximum risk."

The teen has had a few fights, most

ly shouting matches, with other young offenders at Syl Apps, according to Clayton.

"He's had a few pockets of problems, but he's not a big behavioural problem. He's a kid who has made some progress, but he's far from the finished product," he said.

"He's just not ready to re-enter (society) yet. You have to weigh it. This is a serious crime. He's starting to buy into the system. He's doing well academically, but he still has problems."

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