



NEWS RELEASE

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It's Time to Stand up for Victims, Not Criminals **OPP Association Urges Canadians to Sign Petition**

(Barrie, Ontario) – It's time the rights of victims and their families outweighed those of criminals. That's the message from the President of the Ontario Provincial Police Association (OPPA), Karl Walsh, who is asking all concerned Canadians to sign an online petition at www.oppa.ca.

Walsh and the Board of Directors of the 8,100-member OPP Association are pushing to have amendments made to existing legislation that ignores the rights of victims when determining where a criminal will be incarcerated.

The move comes on the heels of a decision by the Federal Court of Canada to move Allan MacDonald, the convicted killer of Ontario Provincial Police Constable Tom Coffin, to a medium security facility closer to his family and support group despite objections by the officer's widow. MacDonald was also reimbursed \$4,000 in court costs.

"This is an outrage, for all victims and their families, in fact, all Canadians," Karl Walsh says. "Once again the rights of criminals outweigh those of all victims and their families."

Allan MacDonald walked into a bar in the town of Penetanguishene, Ontario in May 1997, put a gun to the back of OPP Const. Coffin's head and pulled the trigger. He executed Const. Coffin because the officer had charged him with impaired driving about a year before.

"Const. Coffin was killed for doing his job – the job that citizens of this country expect police officers to do," Walsh said.

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MacDonald was convicted of first degree murder and won't be eligible for parole until 2022. He had initially been jailed at the medium security Fenbrook Institution in Gravenhurst until an assessment indicated he should be housed in a maximum facility. He was subsequently transferred to Joyceville Penitentiary near Kingston.

MacDonald, however, appealed this decision and listed a number of arguments, one of which was his assertion that the decision was based solely on the complaints of the victim's widow and on representations made by the Canadian Police Association (at the request of the Ontario Provincial Police Association). He termed these "unilateral decisions" and ones that should not have been made. In granting him a transfer back to Fenbrook, the court decided to place him closer to his family, friends and support group. His transfer also placed him squarely back near the family of the officer he murdered.

At present the Corrections and Conditional Release Act is the legislation used to determine what penitentiary an inmate is placed in.

"The current legislation has no provision for factoring in the effect the criminal and the crime have on any victim's family," Walsh said. "In this instance, it never considered the effect such a move would have on Prov. Const. Coffin's widow, his children, his parents and siblings who still live in the area, not to mention the community he served and the policing community to which he belonged."

"We are adamant that all victims of crime, the loved ones, and friends left behind, must not continue to be victimized by the criminals who stole so much from their lives," Walsh said.

Those wishing to sign the petition can do so on line at the Ontario Provincial Police Association website at www.oppa.ca.

Contact: Karl Walsh
President, Ontario Provincial Police Association
(705) 728-6161