

Father vows to fight for Carley's law

The bill would have stiffened penalties for hit-and-run drivers

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Barry Regan, father of 13-year-old Carley Regan, who was run over and left to die in 2003 by a man prohibited from driving, will continue to fight for "Carley's Law" despite the bill's defeat Wednesday in the House of Commons.



CREDIT: Ian Smith, Vancouver Sun
Carley Regan was killed by a hit-and-run driver in 2003.

The bill would have set hefty minimum jail terms for hit-and-run drivers.

Paul Wettlaufer, the man who killed Carley, received a 14-month sentence for his crime and is now living in Langley after serving 10 months in prison. "People are just getting sick and tired of seeing people getting a slap on the wrist," Regan said Thursday from his Abbotsford home. "We're going to keep going. [The bill] is going to get pushed in and pushed in until it finally goes through."

"This is not just for us. We're doing this for everybody who's been in the same situation we are in and for those people who are sick and tired of the way things have been going."

Carley's Law was defeated by a 194-94 margin, but Regan said he was encouraged that more MPs voted in favour of the bill than in previous votes. Abbotsford MP Randy White sponsored the bill and is planning to draft a new piece of legislation, which he wants to introduce after the summer parliamentary break, according to a statement released Thursday by his office.

The past two-and-a-half years have been painful for Regan, his ex-wife, and Carley's younger sister, Jessica. Jessica was with her big sister when Wettlaufer's car veered towards them, striking and killing Carley.

"I would say out of all of us it's probably harder on [Jessica] than anybody because they were so close," Regan said.

"We're struggling. We miss Carley dearly, but we can't undo what's been done."

Regan said he had been looking forward to teaching Carley to drive and handing her the keys to a 1977 Dodge Warlock pickup truck the two had spent time refurbishing before she was killed. Regan has continued to work on the truck and said it is one way of keeping Carley's spirit alive.

Regan's fight to pass Carley's Law is another. He said the "overwhelming support" he has had from across the country encourages him to keep fighting.

The issue of stiffer sentences for hit-and-run drivers was enough to get some MPs crossing party lines Wednesday night. North Vancouver's Liberal MP Don Bell broke with caucus colleagues to join Conservatives in support of the bill.

Bell, former mayor of the District of North Vancouver, said police often complained about

lenient sentencing during his decades in municipal politics.

"I tend to believe that we need to give more direction to the courts, to the justice system, to back up the work police do in cities and towns across this country," he said.

MPs opposing the bill said during debate in March that they sympathized with victims like Carley Regan and her family, but they said the legislation was too harsh and would likely have run afoul of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The bill would have eliminated plea bargaining and set a minimum four-year jail term for anyone convicted of hit-and-run causing bodily harm.

The minimum sentence would rise to seven years for hit-and-run causing death.

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