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MPs balk at bill setting minimum term for hit and run at 4 years

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-A Conservative bid to jack up prison terms for hit-and-run offenders, dubbed "**Carley's Law**" in recognition of an Aldergrove, B.C., teen run over by a repeat drunk driver, has stalled in Parliament.

Liberal, Bloc Quebecois and New Democratic MPs, while saying they sympathize with victims like the B.C. gas station attendant dragged to his gruesome death this week, claim the bill is too harsh and likely violates the Charter of Rights.

"What it says to me is that this place called Ottawa is not responsive to what is really happening on the streets in other areas of the country," Randy White (Abbotsford) said yesterday. "Politicians here are so far away from reality."

White, despite overwhelming odds, said he's still hoping he can convince MPs from other parties to change their minds when the bill is voted on May 5.

The private bill, co-sponsored by White and B.C. MP Dick Harris, is named after Carley Regan, killed in 2003 when Paul Wettlaufer, driving with a suspended licence, struck her and left her for dead. He received a 14-month sentence under a plea bargain, and ended up serving just 10 months.

The Tory bill would eliminate plea bargaining and set a minimum sentence of four years for those convicted of hit and run causing bodily harm, and a minimum of seven years for hit and run causing death - whether the driver knew it occurred or not.

The Criminal Code now sets a maximum five-year term for failure to stop at the scene of an accident. If a driver knows the victim suffered harm, that doubles to 10 years, and if the driver knows a person has died he or she can go to jail for life. There are no minimum jail terms.

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