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Dad: No justice in hit-and-run deaths

By JONATHAN JENKINS, SUN MEDIA

Canada's laws that are supposed to punish drivers who run down pedestrians and then leave them dying in the streets are too weak to discourage anyone from fleeing the scene of a crash, says a Calgary man who lost his daughter to a hit-and-run driver.

"It's like an epidemic," Gerald Giacomelli said yesterday. "It would have made a world of difference to me if the person stopped. People make mistakes but to not stop and offer assistance. You wouldn't do that to dog or a deer."

Giacomelli's daughter Lindsay, 20, was killed on March 17 last year in Calgary.

The driver who ran down the University of Calgary dance student allegedly went home, ordered a pizza and watched a movie.

He's still before the courts awaiting trial.

Giacomelli said he's found most people convicted of leaving the scene of a fatal crash get a sentence of six months to two years, and usually have an excellent chance at early parole.

Of deterrence, he said, "There's none. The judge says, 'Sorry, don't do that again.' "

That's why he joined a campaign to toughen federal laws and enshrine a mandatory seven-year sentence for drivers who leave the scene of a fatality.

The drive was successful in getting a bill, pushed by former Conservative MP Randy White, into the House of Commons, but it was defeated in 2003.

Giacomelli is hoping the new Conservative government will back similar legislation and he's already contacting MPs about resurrecting the bill.

"I've called (Prime Minister) Stephen Harper - he's my MP," Giacomelli said. "I don't know where it will go.

"I won't let it go."