Media Information

Date: **August 8, 2024**
Regarding: **Heather Barker's murderer released on day parole**

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WARNING: this article contains content related to domestic violence (gender-based violence), which may be distressing to some readers. Reader discretion is advised. If you or someone you know has been harmed by domestic violence (gender-based violence), contact Archway Society for Domestic Peace at 250-542-1122 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Vernon BC – On June 27, 2024, the Parole Board of Canada granted Heather Barker's murderer day parole after denying his request for full parole. This comes one year after Justice Alison Beames sentenced him to four years for the manslaughter of Heather Barker.

Not only are we profoundly disappointed in the original sentence, but also the parole board's decision in a case involving such serious charges. Heather's common-law partner was convicted of the murder of Heather and receiving day parole just one year into his sentence is a lenient punishment for such a grave crime, and an injustice to her family and friends.

The decision to grant him day parole undermines the principles of justice and fails to prioritize public safety, specifically the safety of women. The report from the parole board explicitly states that he is at high risk for intimate partner violence. Granting early release and day parole to him sends a distressing message about accountability and the value of human life, and again, specifically the value of the lives of women. It also sends a dangerous message to offenders about the minimal punishment that will be levied in these cases.

This early day parole is likely to reopen wounds and bring back painful memories and it feels like the value of Heather's life is being diminished. It erodes trust in the justice system and can make people feel like the system does not adequately protect victims and their families.

Key messages:

Men guilty of intimate partner violence (IPV) that leads to death are considered a danger to society for several reasons:

1. Pattern of Violence: IPV often follows a pattern of escalating violence. If someone has escalated to the point of committing murder, it suggests a severe and dangerous pattern that could manifest again.
2. Lack of Empathy: Such individuals often exhibit a lack of empathy and disregard for human life, which can make them dangerous in other contexts as well.
3. Control and Power Dynamics: IPV is often about exerting control and power over a partner. Such behavior can extend to other relationships and situations, posing a broader societal risk.
4. Reoffending: Statistics indicate that individuals who commit severe acts of violence are at a higher risk of reoffending. This risk extends beyond intimate partners to other potential victims.

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5. Public Safety: The safety of the public is a primary concern in criminal justice. Allowing individuals with a history of extreme violence to reenter society without adequate rehabilitation and monitoring can pose significant risks.
6. Psychological Impact: The trauma and fear instilled in the community, particularly among those who know the offender's history, can have wide-reaching psychological effects.
Rehabilitation and monitoring are crucial, but the gravity of the offense often justifies strict measures to protect society.

At Archway we have wrap around support for those experiencing domestic violence. This includes safe shelter for those women choosing to leave their partners, support to find permanent housing, and help navigating the justice system. Equally importantly we also have a wide breadth of services if they choose to stay in their relationship; safety planning, counselling, and support for those women too.

We have staff who are non-judgmental, professional, confidential, and who know how difficult these situations are. They have devoted their careers to helping women, children, youth, and families through these situations and are supportive and encouraging. So please reach out to us if you feel like you need help or support. We do not want to see another woman die at the hands of her partner in our community.

More Information:

A reminder about the rate of femicide in the North Okanagan. Here is a current list of murdered (and missing) women from our area:

Taylor van Diest (2011)
Traci Genereaux (2017)
Heather Barker (2018)
Ashley Simpson (2021)
Ashley Wadsworth (2022)
Tatjana Stefanski (2024)
Tina Mackenzie (2024)

Missing Women from the North Okanagan:

Caitlin Potts missing since 2016
Deanna Wertz missing since 2016
Nicole Bell missing since 2017

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