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Police closer to finding killer who preyed on prostitutes

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One sexual predator. Three suspects.

Police believe they're getting close.

The man they want is a killer. A rapist. A guy who left the naked, decomposed body of 19-year-old prostitute Kimlyn Judy Tolgyes at Burlington's Kerncliff Park a year ago.

A guy who they believe is responsible for the disappearance of streetwalkers Susan Gourley, 39, and Felicia Floriani, 15. A man who violently attacked eight other prostitutes and street women, leaving them violated and battered.

Last November, when Hamilton and Halton police teamed up to form **Project Advocate** in the search for the predator (Halton has since pulled out), detectives began to wade through a list of 150 "persons of interest."

The men on that list got there for any number of reasons. Someone thought they resembled the composite drawing of the attacker. Or they knew one of the victims. Or they were seen in the area of the crime. Or they had some other possible connection to the case.

Police followed every lead. Checked out every name.

And that left them with five guys. "Five that we looked at very closely," says Hamilton Detective Sergeant Steve Hrab, **Project Advocate's** lead investigator.

It didn't take long before another two people were eliminated.

And so there are three.

One of the men is believed to be targeting young women, but not necessarily around here.

Another may or may not be involved. Police are waiting for tests to be completed at Toronto's Centre of Forensic Science before knowing what to make of him.

Then there's the third man. "We think he is responsible for a couple (of the 11 crimes being investigated by **Project Advocate**), but can we tie him in to all the others? We're not sure yet," says Hrab.

Police must be careful not to have tunnel vision while working on a series of cases like this, he cautions. Though they

have good reason to believe one man committed all 11 crimes, detectives have not ruled out the possibility that more than one person could be responsible.

The investigation becomes even more complicated when you consider the victims. Prostitutes and street women are among the most vulnerable females in our society, says Hrab. They are victimized easily and often.

"There is more than one -- probably five, probably 10 -- individuals preying on this group of females," says Hrab.

So matching the right predator to the right crime can be difficult.

And there is another twist.

Waterloo police are also chasing a man attacking women. Since May he's targeted six young women in the university area of that city, usually following them home from bars late at night.

In one incident, he followed a woman to her Hickory Street home. She went inside, closed the door behind her and went into her bathroom. When she came out, the man was standing in her house. He groped her, but fled when she screamed.

On another night, a woman was followed home by a man who then peeped through the window at her.

And, on Sept. 6, the man struck twice. First grabbing a 14-year-old girl in a sports field. He asked her if she needed someone to walk her home. When she said no, he grabbed her and tried to take her clothes off. A group of university students scared him away.

A few hours later, the man followed a 20-year-old to her friend's front porch before he finally went away.

On Tuesday, Waterloo police released a composite drawing of the man they are looking for. It bears a striking resemblance to the sketch of the predator **Project Advocate** is looking for. In both cases the man is described as white, in his 20s, 5-foot-7 to 5-foot-10 with a slim to medium build. Victims in both communities say their attacker had short blond or reddish-blond hair.

Hrab says there is certainly a remarkable likeness between the two drawings. Hamilton and Waterloo investigators are now sharing information to see if there are any other significant similarities.

Susan Clairmont's commentary appears regularly in The Spectator. sclairmont@thespec.com or 905-526-3539.

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