

Teen jailed for role in mugging at ATM

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A 16-year-old Hamilton robber was so fearful of being jailed Wednesday that he threw up in the car on the way to court despite fasting for Ramadan.

“He is so upset and fearful of going into custody, he threw up from the anxiety even though he is fasting,” defence counsel Beth Bromberg said.

The youth’s daily prayers to be spared jail during his Ramadan observance failed to move the court. Ontario Court Justice Fred Campling ordered him to be taken into custody for the purpose of having psychological testing conducted.

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan began in July and will continue to Aug. 19.

The vast majority of Hamilton’s 30,000 Muslims will fast for 17 hours during each day of the observance.

The youth is one of three Hamilton teens who pleaded guilty to the Dec. 5, 2011, robbery of 71-year-old Mary Hritzun as she left the TD Canada Trust branch on Upper James Street just after 1 p.m. The identity of all three is shielded by the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

As Hritzun was returning to her vehicle, the trio surrounded her. The youth who appeared in court yesterday pulled down a black tuque to conceal his face and brandished a knife while demanding the victim turn over her purse. When Hritzun refused, he pulled on the purse until he forced the woman to the ground.

The three fled empty-handed, but during the scuffle the accused cut the victim on the right cheek with a knife.

All three teens said they committed the offence under the influence of marijuana.

The 16-year-old, who has no record, had been on bail.

But Campling heard Wednesday from Bromberg that her client’s pre-sentence report was “concerning” and that red flags had been raised about his anger and his parents’ ability to manage him.

Court heard he had smashed a telephone, a laptop and done damage to his parents’ home while on bail.

The Crown is seeking jail time for all three youths, whose next court appearance is set for Aug. 28. They are expected to be sentenced Oct. 10, once psychological testing is completed on two of the three.

“The hope is the assessment will get to the bottom of what happened with you to cause you to commit such a serious offence. You were only 15 when this robbery occurred,” the judge told the youth, who quietly sobbed and dabbed his eyes with tissue as he sat at the defence table.

Hritzun said in her victim impact statement the attack has left her with feelings of helplessness and fear.

“I wonder about teenagers I see on the street. Are they the good ones — like the 150 or so I saw on a TV newscast, all busy organizing and handing out food for the needy? Or are they the other type who would plot and attack with a knife a widow and grandmother, all for just a few dollars?” she wrote.

kpeters@thespec.com (mailto:kpeters@thespec.com)

905-526-3388