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Killer hunt moves to Cabbagetown

By CAL MILLAR
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The search for the killer of Kathleen McLaughlin moved to hotels in the Cabbagetown area after police discovered she was last seen alive there Friday night.

And last night, detectives from York Region were on tour of Toronto's tenderloin interviewing hookers, bartenders and street regulars in hopes of turning up leads in the murder investigation.

The Danforth Avenue woman's bludgeoned body was found Monday by surveyors working in a York Region cornfield. Police said she had been dead for several days.

The divorced mother, 33, was a regular customer at several downtown beverage rooms and police believe she may have met her killer in one of them.

She was last seen alive in a hotel parking lot at Carlton Street and Sherbourne Street.

Last night, prostitutes working that area described a man who'd been regularly propositioning women there to go with him to an area north of Metro.

"It's a lot safer up there," he told the women. "There aren't that many cops."

Joanne, 23, a prostitute, said she told the man it



KATHLEEN
McLAUGHLIN
Bludgeoned to death

didn't make any sense when she talked with him in his parked car. "I told him there's lots of spaces around here...and told him to hit off."

The man was described as being in his 50s with gray hair and driving a cream or brown colored car.

Prostitutes also told of increasing amounts of violence, but said they haven't complained because the police just don't do anything.

"Some people are even saying it was only a hooker that was killed," one woman said. "It's one less to worry about."

However, she said Kathy

was something special to those who spend their time in the area and described her as an extremely affectionate person.

"We're all co-operating with the homicide guys to get her killer," said Rosemary Petrick, a bartender at the LeBaza Dining Lounge on Carlton Street. "It's not safe for anybody right now. We're all working with the cops to find the guy."

Petrick said she's known Kathy for 17 years and said all her problems were related to drugs.

She said Kathy got away from the street scene for about eight years when she got married and had a family. "The marriage and the kids straightened her out, but when it went sour...this was the only place she knew to come back to."

LeBaza owner Paul Zebell has put Kathy's picture near the front window of the restaurant. He said he wants everyone to know who was murdered and to hunt for her killer.

He also hopes to collect some money for the woman's three children.

Metro cops said they've known the woman for many years and said she was due to appear in court in October for the robbery of a man, 53, in a parking lot beside Stage 212 last June.