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Former OPP officer Robert Lewis leaves court in Orangeville on Monday after his sentencing hearing on his child molestation conviction.

JOHN GODDARD/TORONTO STAR

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Staff Reporter

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A former OPP officer who sexually molested boys for most of his policing career deserves 10 to 12 years behind bars, the prosecution argued Monday.

Robert Lewis, a hulking man who committed his crimes throughout 25 of his 30 years on the force, has never admitted guilt, expressed remorse or taken responsibility for his actions, Crown prosecutor Mary Ellen Cullen told a sentencing hearing at Superior Court in Orangeville.

"He is a disgrace to the uniform that he wore," Cullen said.

Lewis led a duplicitous life as an apparently caring husband and community man while using his position as a police officer to commit his acts, she said. On occasion, he committed his crimes in a police cruiser, in uniform.

Defence lawyer Leo Kinahan argued for a term of five to seven years, saying penetration did not occur.

"Sometimes I dream about getting out of the police car and running, wishing he would just shoot me or run over me," one victim said in an impact statement read in court amid stifled sniffles and the rustle of tissue.

"Probably the issue I have to live with," another said, "is that if I had come forward and told someone when this was happening, it might have stopped then. . . . Maybe this all could have stopped long ago if I hadn't feared reprisals because of Mr. Lewis's job as a policeman."

Cullen said the victims have nothing to apologize for.

Lewis, 63, a towering figure standing 6-foot-6, entered the courthouse looking puffy and disheveled in a rumpled black suit, accompanied by his wife, Carol.

One feature of the case was that Lewis typically abused boys of close family friends. During one incident at a friend's home, the boy's father was upstairs, Cullen said. In another case, the boy's parents were in the next room.

During proceedings, Lewis sat impassively as victims standing to the side and slightly behind him told how his abuse destroyed their self-esteem, leading to troubles in marriage, other close relationships and sometimes with addiction.

Asked by the judge if he wished to speak, Lewis said he stands by his not-guilty plea but accepts the decision of the court.

In June, Lewis was found guilty of 19 sex-related offences out of 25 originally brought against him by 10 complainants. The acts took place between 1969 and 1994. Lewis was first charged in 2006 and convicted after a 35-day trial that began in May 2009.

The judge reserved his decision on the sentence.

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