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COMMUNITY: Taylor family trying to get injured daughter home to Markham

Family faces huge air ambulance bill

BY JENNIFER BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Markham's Dave Taylor wants just one thing for Christmas — his daughter back home in an Ontario hospital, preferably in York Region.

Five months ago, a horseback riding accident left 29-year-old Tammy Reid-Taylor in a coma, with damage to her brain stem. And now a Vancouver hospital has warned Taylor that she has to be moved to a chronic care facility, but none are available in British Columbia.

For the past month, the Raymerville Drive resident has been searching for a bed in Ontario for his daughter, but has found nothing but red tape.

"It's unbelievable. It's almost like she's a foreigner. There's got to be a bed

available somewhere in York Region," said a frustrated Taylor, who owns Taylor's Meats in Aurora.

Newmarket's York County Hospital told him it has no room. York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill hasn't responded to his requests, and Markham Stouffville Hospital told him Tammy would be low on their priority list because she doesn't live here.

Although Taylor lives in Markham, the hospital explained its first priority is Markham residents, then Ontario. Tammy had been living with her parents in Markham until two years ago, when she moved to Vancouver to take her dream job with a prestigious advertising firm. Tammy's accident happened July 4, when she travelled with

her local church group to a ranch two hours north of Kamloops. "She'd maybe been riding once before in her life," Taylor said.

Just as Tammy was finishing the ride, it is believed she leaned forward, perhaps to tighten the straps on the saddle. The horse started to run and Tammy fell off, hitting her head on the ground. She wasn't wearing a helmet.

Unconscious, she was flown to Kamloops because the ranch was too far away from Vancouver. For two weeks Tammy was on life support in the Kamloops hospital, making it difficult and costly for her family to visit.

Then Tammy's firm stepped in and arranged to have her transported to Vancouver's Lion's Gate Hospital, so her parents could stay at her apartment just 10 blocks away. Tammy is off life support now, but requires a feeding tube and daily physiotherapy. Although her eyes are open and she reacts to some stimuli, she is still in a coma that doctors fear may last for up to four years.

Tammy's mother, Sylvia, is still in Vancouver. She talks to her daughter constantly, trying to keep her stimulated. But the clock appears to be ticking as the hospital pressures the family to find a bed for Tammy in Ontario.

Even if the family finds a bed for Tammy in Ontario, they could face a \$25,000 air ambulance fee to fly her home. Some health officials have suggested corporations with private jets often donate flights for cases such as Tammy's. The family's church has also offered to assist and a fund has been established at the TD Bank in Aurora.

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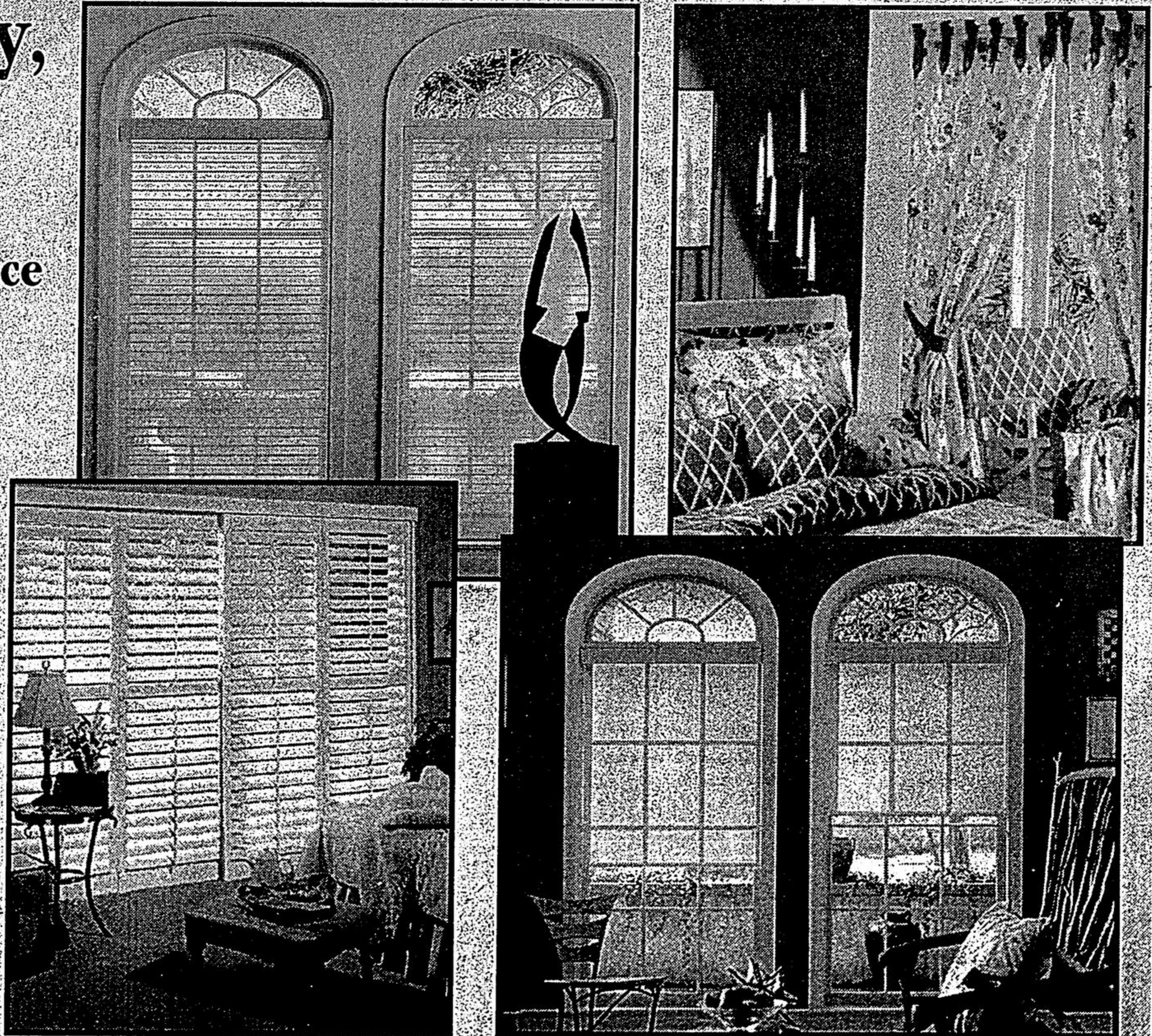
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