

Inquest bogged down again

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

York Regional Police officers testifying at the inquest into the death of 16-year-old Faraz Suleman have obtained their own lawyer, causing a further delay in the already bogged-down proceeding.

The legal wranglings took all day yesterday to hammer out, angering Suleman's mother, Shaheen Kamadia.

"It's frustrating for the family to have to wait. All I want is to let it begin and for the truth to come out," she said.

Police union lawyer Bill MacKenzie appeared before coroner William Lucas early Friday, requesting the right to represent the union and nine officers set to appear as witnesses.

Lawyer Rod McLeod had already been hired to represent the police force as a whole, including the officers, the police board and Chief Julian Fantino.

But MacKenzie explained several officers became "uncomfortable"



SHAHEEN KAMADIA: Family of teen frustrated by delays at inquest.

Monday afternoon when they realized they would be represented by the same lawyer as the force and the chief.

They had been asked to sign a waiver allowing McLeod to represent them, with the proviso that they could seek their own counsel at any time during the inquest.

Although three officers signed the waiver, nine refused and went to their union for advice.

"When the officers were confronted with this, as late as Monday afternoon, needless to say they had some difficulty going through this (legal language) so they turned to the association and ultimately counsel," MacKenzie said.

MacKenzie was granted standing, but then the debate turned to whether McLeod should be allowed to continue representing the other three officers.

MacKenzie argued that since McLeod has already interviewed the nine officers, he could have inside information he can use against them in cross-examination.

"My submission, sir, is that you have no option here but to indicate to Mr. McLeod that he is in a conflict of interest," MacKenzie said. "You have no option other than to dismiss Mr. McLeod," he said.

Lucas rejected the request, but the debate may continue when the inquest resumes Monday.

The inquest had already been delayed four days after lawyers representing Suleman's father and a Toronto support group appealed the coroner's decision not to grant them status at the inquest.

Justice Archie Campbell rejected their appeal on Thursday, agreeing with Lucas' argument that both parents could be represented by one lawyer, except during testimony about Kamadia's involvement in a police sting to arrest her son.

Kamadia helped arrange a meeting with her son, so police could arrest him in connection with a series of home invasions and car-jackings.

But he was spotted driving a stolen Jeep and a police chase ensued. The chase ended on a residential street, but Suleman was shot in the head after an officer was struck by the Jeep.

The officer who shot him, Det. Robert Wiche, has his own lawyer representing him at the inquest.

The inquest will resume Monday at 9 a.m. in Sharon.

REGIONAL News Digest



WHAT'S HAPPENING

Varley War Artist — exhibit
Nov. 10 to Jan. 16
Varley Art Gallery
216 Main St., Unionville

Fred Varley, of the Group of Seven, was commissioned to record Canadian war activities in 1918 and 1919. Military portraits in oil, sketches and watercolours are part of the Remembrance Day celebrations.

Main Street study

A consultant has been hired at a cost of \$15,000 to study the commercial revitalization of Main Street, Markham.

Joseph/Morgan/Johnston Research and Planning Services will analyse the Main Street Vision Plan, which builds on the recommendations of previous studies, as well as incorporating ideas of current merchants and residents.

The report will identify trends and characteristics of the heritage street, and recommend ways to improve storefront presentation and retail streetscape. Recommendations on the viability of a farmer's market, land use mix, the pedestrian environment and beautification opportunities will also be included.

Train decision delayed

The call to double the number of trains running through Stouffville will be answered Nov. 16 at 8 p.m.

A drop in ridership on the York-Durham Heritage Train prompted the railway association to ask council for permission to increase runs to seven a day on weekends and holidays.

On Tuesday, Councillor Judy Scala convinced council to delay making a decision, giving the public time to comment.

The railway association reported that, in a one-year, 772 fewer passengers took the heritage ride, representing a 31-per-cent drop, and suggested a more flexible schedule to meet the needs of the riders.

York boards lead by example in co-op education

Passport to Prosperity partnership gives Ontario students hands-on training in the workplace

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

Chantale Mantha and Carolyn Lawrence know the benefits of gaining work experience.

The two York Region high school students have spent the fall semester in co-operative education programs at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Richmond Hill, developing skills they can apply in future careers.

And now, the Ontario government wants to cultivate that employer/student partnership, similar to programs the region's Catholic and public school boards have been involved with for years.

Yesterday, Education Minister Janet Ecker joined Colleges and Universities Minister Dianne Cunningham at the hotel to launch a new campaign encouraging employers to hire high school students and provide them with the necessary workplace experience.

Called Passport to Prosperity, the initiative will give all Ontario students an opportunity to learn through hands-on training, a requirement of the new secondary school curriculum.

Last year, more than 70,000 Grade 11 and 12 students were involved in co-ops, but we have more than 300,000 students in Grade 11 and 12. The challenge is to



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Brother Andre Catholic High School student Carolyn Lawrence, left, and Chantale Mantha, right, of St. Robert Catholic High School in Thornhill are in co-op programs, which were promoted as a provincial initiative by Education Minister Janet Ecker yesterday in Richmond Hill.

give every one of them this opportunity," Ecker said.

"Students see the link between the classroom and how it is applied in their work. The employers also know the importance of building the skill level for our young people."

"Working together, we are going to give the next generation the experience and guidance they need to achieve their goals."

Lawrence, a Grade 12 student at Brother Andre Catholic High School in Markham, has been working in the hotel's health club since

September. She said the Sheraton is an ideal co-op placement because it offers a variety of challenges for students.

And Mantha said the hands-on experience of a work program beats anything offered in a classroom.

"This gives us basic skills and the knowledge of what's going on in the real world," added Mantha, an OAC student at Thornhill's St. Robert Catholic High School.

"You're introduced to what you can expect to find when you get out of school. It also allows you to do

something outside of just your school courses and you can discover a viewpoint of what you may want to do when school is finished."

Sheraton general manager Scott Boyle, who has 22 co-op students working in 11 departments, said the employer is often the big winner, since many students eventually become paid employees, removing a time-consuming interview process and training programs.

"It's a wonderful match for us and the students are very keen to learn," he said. "They are willing to almost do anything."

Meanwhile, public school board education director Bill Hogarth called the new provincial partnership a natural extension of what local boards are already doing, but said it may encourage new companies to come on board.

"We need to have more companies in York Region participate. The government's help will give an added emphasis and focus," Hogarth said.

It makes an easier transition from school to the workplace. If we look at future trends in jobs, we know we need students to consider all possibilities and we need students to value the workplace, no matter when they reach it. Confidence, that's what this does for them."

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