

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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LETTERS

Mother lives with grief of son's shooting death

As a single parent who has raised two sons since they were toddlers, I have dedicated my life to them.

One dark night changed our lives dramatically forever. On June 19, 1996, my elder son, Faraz Suleman, 16, was killed by a police bullet.

Faraz, a confused teenager, was behind the wheel of a stolen vehicle. In the course of fleeing police, he was fatally shot by a York Regional Police officer.

The officer claims being struck by the Jeep, so he fired the shot with no regard to the fact that I, a responsible parent, had arranged with police to arrest my son peacefully.

They were expected to apprehend Faraz in a doughnut shop. Instead, they chose to chase the vehicle. Much to my dismay, I personally jeopardized my son's precious life.

A criminal charge was laid against the officer that eventually was tossed out of court by a judge in August 1997.

Another tragedy occurred prior to the officer walking free. He was stabbed by a tormented teenager deeply affected by the loss of Faraz.

Many lives have been shattered as of the day Faraz was killed.

For a parent, the death of a child is devastating. Part of me died with my child. Not a day goes by without grief striking. It is marked with deep sorrow, emptiness and loneliness. It is manifested by an overwhelming feeling of missing my loved one.

Being a mother, the fear of what Faraz felt days before the shooting and other horrible thoughts recur. He was only 16. Imagine the panic he went through. He was scared of police. He was facing criminal charges, therefore he would not come home in the last week of his life.

Then, anger follows, especially because I co-operated fully with police. What judgment can a youth Faraz's age have versus the judgment of an experienced police officer more than twice his age? Despite the turmoil, I am totally committed to bringing about justice for my beloved son. The heavy burden of dealing with legal issues, both emotional and financial, seems to be never-ending.

What keeps me going is my rightful determination to know why Faraz was killed. I still do not have full answers, despite a week of pre-



liminary hearing which many observed was nothing but a farce.

Sometimes, I wonder whether I will ever know the truth.

I am a living example of why families who have lost their loved ones at the hands of police do not have faith in the judicial system. The system is not perfect.

According to several legal opinions, the judge who set the officer free erred in law and jurisdiction. Despite the miscarriage of justice, neither the Crown's office nor the Attorney General were prepared to review this discharge. The rationale expressed was that there was no reasonable prospect for a conviction.

The fact of the matter is, no police officer in Ontario, charged with shooting-related incidents, has ever been convicted when trials are held by a jury. What is my alternative? Retain an attorney and privately have an indictment preferred, and for what? Fight against a powerful and corrupt system? Waste my limited financial resources in a biased criminal justice system? It all seems futile. Had my son been killed by someone other than a police officer, I am sure the legal aftermath would have had lesser roadblocks to overcome. This is my son's life and it was robbed in an instant. Surely, I, too, should have a right to equality in justice.

Our next steps are the coroner's inquest and civil litigation. Finally, the inquest is taking place. The family's hope is, once more, for the truth to surface — questions that have not been answered for more than three years.

In the midst of this proceeding, my family still suffers an unbearable torture because part of society appears to accept such police-related situations. Some still feel that a police officer cannot ever do any wrong. Let me remind the readers that no one is perfect, including

police officers.

Being cynical, if all steps fail, then I will have no other alternative but to let divine justice prevail. The Lord is the only one I can turn to, as He is colourblind and, therefore, the only judge I can trust.

SHAHEEN KAMADIA
MARKHAM

Premier's lack of common sense costs Ontario health care

Re: Premier Mike Harris is far from out of touch. Letters, Oct. 30

I believe it is not an adviser's head that should be on the chopping block. One of the reasons for the increase in spending from the Ontario Health Insurance system is the Premier's "lack of common sense" approval of coverage to residents while out of our country.

This also includes the prescription medications they may also require for up to just under six months at a time. It's time you buy your own insurance if you can afford the luxury of an extended absence from your primary country of residence, otherwise stay in Canada.

Did you know that American health care facilities are advertising freely that Ontario residents are covered for high-demand services? Let's keep the money here and operate our own systems, looking after ourselves first.

How many people are aware that Mr. Harris in his "uncommon sense" hired an American consulting firm to evaluate a health system that is the envy of many of the other provinces in Canada.

J. STEEN
MARKHAM

LETTERS: POLICY

Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The newspaper reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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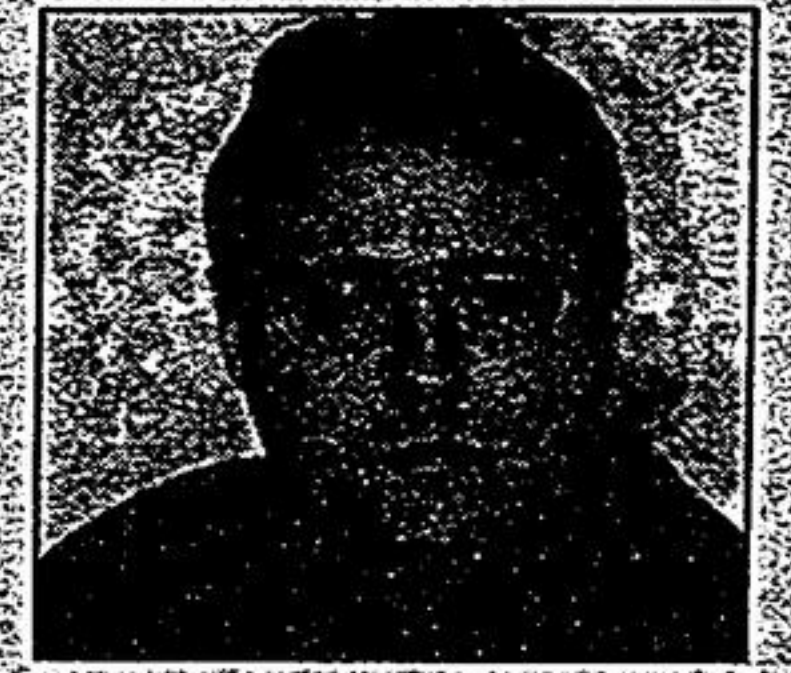
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Alan Shackleton

Gilchrist scandal best thing to happen to Oak Ridges Moraine

The environment is cool again. Witness the growing importance of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Suddenly, saving the moraine, talking about its unique qualities, is sexy again.

People are prepared to chain themselves to trees to save it. They've even been practising for such an event. (Apparently, there's a right way and a wrong way to chain yourself to a tree.)

There are a number of reasons the moraine is in the spotlight, but the sweet smell of scandal has been the single biggest one.

The issue in the halls of power has nothing to do with trees and wetlands, it's all about politics.

Ontario's former Minister of Municipal Affairs, Steve Gilchrist, is now the subject of an investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police regarding complaints from developers about his conduct.

The developers allege Gilchrist told them that if they wanted to meet with him, they would have to talk to his personal lawyer.

Environmentalists feel they have lost an ally in Gilchrist, who has a history of getting under developers' skins. We were first to report that Gilchrist had assured environmentalists he would continue his protectionist ways when it came to the Rouge Park in York Region and the moraine.

Environmentalists must have been shaking their heads when Gilchrist announced his resignation and was replaced by Tony Clement, a man they view as pro-development.

But now, it appears, the Gilchrist scandal is the best thing that could have happened to the moraine.

The opposition Liberals have made the moraine a priority.

The party's environment critic, Michael Colle, has introduced a private member's bill calling for the establishment of a commission to control moraine land. The commission would have sweeping powers over development and would even have the power to expropriate land.

Colle has also raised a few interesting questions about developers and pointedly asked who is running the province. He compared the increase in development applications along the moraine to a gold rush and said the developers had to be reined in.

Environmental groups have been given new hope by the attention the moraine is now receiving.

It is under a media spotlight at the moment and the environmentalists are hoping to strike for its protection while the iron is hot.

I bet there are a lot of developers out there right now who are starting to wish they'd never heard the name Steve Gilchrist.