

Group lobbies province for tougher riding laws

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

One Aurora councillor believes the death of 10-year-old Elizabeth Hader was not in vain.

The Aurora girl was killed when her head hit a rock as a horse dragged her about 150 metres at the Wagon Wheel Ranch in Whitchurch-Stouffville April 18.

But Aurora Councillor Phyllis Morris said after a three-member delegation from Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville made an emotional pitch to three MPPs and a ministry representative at Queen's Park Thursday, she thinks it is only a matter of time before legislation is put in place to protect horseback riders across the province.

"We came away with a sense of accomplishment," Morris said. "The provincial government was asked to bring forward standardized legislation to license and regulate safety standards for all commercial horse riding establishments operating within Ontario."

The appeal also included amending the Municipal Act to permit local municipalities to not only license but also to regulate safety

standards for any commercial horse riding establishment.

As well, the York Region delegation wants the province to make it mandatory to have horse riding establishments carry liability insurance.

A Toronto woman was also waiting for the results of this meeting.

Patricia Shaw's 12-year-old son was killed in 1985 after falling from a horse in Beaverton.

While a coroner's jury into Jamie Shaw's death recommended that helmet laws be brought forward, none were. Shaw hopes the latest appeal will be different.

"It will," stressed Morris. "It looks as if Elizabeth Hader and Jamie Shaw didn't die in vain," Morris said. As well, the children's deaths will be the catalyst behind another appeal scheduled for March 20.

While the Hader family wait for the inquest into their daughter's death to get under way (to be determined after the criminal charges are dealt with), Paul Hader has made a public appeal that mandatory helmets be put in place. As well, to show support for a



ELIZABETH HADER: 10-year-old died in horseback riding accident at Whitchurch-Stouffville ranch.

municipal bylaw covering horse riding establishments. Paul and Lori Hader attended council meetings in both Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The bylaw now in place carries a \$5,000 fine.

"Elizabeth's parents took comfort in the fact that things are moving along," Morris said. "Like us, they want across-the-board unifor-

mity to help ensure safety for all of Ontario."

Helmets and riding gear factored into Elizabeth's death. While riding a four-year-old gelding at Musselman's Lake's Wagon Wheel Ranch, Elizabeth's foot got caught in a stirrup. While the child struck her head on a rock and was dragged to her death, her helpless parents and a sibling watched in horror.

The owner of the ranch and an employee are facing criminal charges in connection with the child's death.

At the time of the accident, residents of York Region were shocked to learn that riding establishments in Ontario aren't subject to municipal or provincial regulations.

Soon after Elizabeth's death, the towns of Aurora, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Georgina adopted a bylaw making it mandatory for children to wear helmets and proper foot gear.

Even though the province is now involved, Morris will still ask Richmond Hill, Markham and eventually King Township and East Gwillimbury to adopt a similar bylaw.

As well, other municipalities across Ontario are now contacting Aurora to find out how to proceed with such a riding establishment bylaw.

"There's lots of interest being shown," Morris said.

At Thursday's meeting, Morris, accompanied by Aurora CAO Bob Panizza and Whitchurch-Stouffville clerk Michele Kennedy, met with local MPPs, including Frank Klees, John O'Toole and Julia Munro and a representative of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations Dave Isubouchi.

"They were sensitive and seemed committed to the cause," Morris said. "It's now a matter of when and not just if."

Kennedy was also impressed with the meeting.

"They seemed interested in mandatory insurance."

"If a riding establishment doesn't have things in place, their insurance could be revoked," Kennedy said.

There are, however, pitfalls. Some municipalities in Ontario are too small to adequately enforce such a bylaw, Kennedy said.

Tammy Reid-Taylor one step closer to home

Friends and strangers rally to support Taylor family

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Tammy Reid-Taylor is her parents' "little miracle."

The 30-year-old slowly emerged from a seven-month coma last February, after a horseback riding accident in Vancouver last summer damaged her brain stem.

Doctors had told her parents, Sylvia and Dave Taylor of Markham, that Reid-Taylor might never recover.

"The doctors gave us little hope," Sylvia Taylor said. "They felt she had gone as far as she would go but the Lord does wonderful things. Tammy has come a long way."

Reid-Taylor began coming out of the coma very gradually.

"It was just different little things. She began communicating with her eyes, or small movements. We knew what was happening," Taylor said.

Today, Reid-Taylor is talking. She has full use of her legs and her left side, while her right side movement is coming on strong. She's learning how to walk again and can lift herself in and out of her wheelchair.

She has recovered her long-term memory, although her short-term memory is still shaky, her mom said.

Told she would be deaf in one ear for life,

Reid-Taylor's hearing has returned to normal. On Monday, doctors removed her feeding tube and she's beginning to feed herself again.

"It's a walk you can't describe for people unless they have walked it," Taylor said. "The path the Lord has made for her is going very slowly. We just have to be patient."

A grueling regimen of physical, occupational and speech therapy at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where Reid-Taylor has been in a rehabilitation program since Dec. 10, fills her days.

"She works so hard," Taylor said. "And it's very hard for her to stay there. She just wants to come home."

That day is coming, Taylor said, but how soon, no one can tell.

"We just take it one day at a time," she said. "Tammy keeps our spirits up. She and her sister, (Tasha) have kept mom and dad going."

The Taylors have had more than their share of grief and frustration in the last year. Reid-Taylor had been living in Vancouver for two years at the time of the accident.

When the hospital out west told the Taylors their daughter would have to be moved to a long-term care facility, they began to realize what they were up against in trying to bring her home — no hospital would take her because she wasn't an Ontario resident.

After the Taylors made their story public, Dan Carnere, president of York County Hospital, and local MPP Frank Klees began working together to find a hospital bed. And



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Tammy Reid-Taylor and her mom Sylvia at the Rehabilitation Institute of Toronto on Dunn Avenue.

they did.

"Still, the schedule is brutal. It's made worse by the distance," Taylor said.

"I work mornings in Aurora, then I'm downtown through the evening. We don't eat dinner until 9 p.m. at the earliest. It's a lot of travelling."

"We're hoping she'll be accepted in the new wing (at York Central) opening in May," she said.

Support from family and friends and the Taylor's strong faith help them cope.

"What people have done for us is wonderful," Taylor said, citing the fact the National Bereavement Association recently donated a fully equipped Dodge Caravan so they can bring Reid-Taylor home for visits and she can attend church.

"That made such a big difference — before it was \$100 each trip," she said.

Someone is with Reid-Taylor from the moment she gets up in the morning to the moment she goes to bed. Friends, family and close members of the Markham Bible Chapel take shifts.

"She's aware of it and she needs that motivation," Taylor said. "And she needs that — the system isn't there for that."

Reid-Taylor's little sister Tasha quit college to be near her and to help out mom and dad. She'll be starting an apprenticeship in hair styling in Uxbridge soon, her proud mom said.

"It was hardest on Tasha, as a sibling. It took over a year of her life. But they were best friends to start and she has really taken over the big sister role."

Taylor credits Reid-Taylor's recovery and the family's sense of peace to prayer.

"God has to be there. We can feel Him there. It's what keeps us going day after day. We keep smiling because the Lord gives us the strength to be there for Tammy. She's our little miracle."

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