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Bureaucratic error delays outcome of Markham car crash trial

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Relatives of a woman killed in a horrific Markham car crash were infuriated Monday when a bureaucratic foul-up delayed sentencing of the man convicted in her death until October.

Petro Pak To Lam, 28, of Scarborough, will appear again in a Newmarket court Oct. 4 for sentencing. He was convicted of manslaughter and criminal negligence causing death in the death of Newmarket resident Andrea Pike, a 29-year-old mother of two who was killed in a crash in May 2000.

The jury that convicted Mr. Tam earlier this year heard the accused was travelling at a high rate of speed in his customized Honda on Woodbine Avenue when he slammed into the driver's side door of Mrs. Pike's vehicle.

A police reconstruction of the accident indicated the Lam vehicle was travelling 170 km/h in a 70-km zone at Woodbine and Riviera Drive when he slammed into Mrs. Pike's car, which was making a left turn out of a plaza.

The accused spent three months in hospital before being charged by York Regional Police.

Relatives of the deceased woman attended the Newmarket court Monday morning, prepared to read victim impact statements prior to Superior Court Justice Alfred Stong passing sentence. But they learned because a pre-sentence report on the accused had not been filed, the day-long proceedings

would have to be set back to Oct. 4. "We're at the mercy of this thing called justice," said a frustrated Richard Pike, father-in-law of the deceased woman.

This is the second time the sentencing phase has been delayed; Mr. Tam was originally to have been sentenced in April.

Crown Attorney Chris Chorney broke the news to the court.

"Suffice it to say, I'm furious. And there are a lot of disappointed people here," he said.

Mr. Chorney would not comment later on the reason for the delayed paperwork.

But he promised in court the case "will be given a great deal of priority" as the next hearing date approaches.

The turn of events came as a blow to relatives who had been preparing themselves for the harrowing experience of delivering victim impact statements, describing how Mrs. Pike's violent and untimely death has affected them.

"It's unbelievable," said Nancy Pennefather, the woman's mother. She said family members had suspended vacations and taken time off work to attend Monday's proceedings, which

were to have completed a process many found painful.

Mrs. Pennefather was prepared, in her impact statement, to tell the court of the agony she and other family members have gone through since May 2000.

"I spent months just finding it too painful to be alive," said Mrs. Pennefather, a psychiatric nurse.

Still, she clings to the hope the sentence handed down will be severe enough to serve as a deterrent to others who drive carelessly.

"I believe it's time to make some changes to the law," Mrs. Pennefather said. "I want a clear message delivered that speeding and reckless driving won't be tolerated."

Scott Pike said he has been attempting to rebuild his life with his two sons, Jordan, now 7 and Evan, 5, after they lost a wife and mother.

He has moved to Barrie from Newmarket and was, this week, enrolling his sons in a new school.

He said his sons have had numerous questions about the accident that claimed their mother's life and the judicial process that followed.

"You try and give it to them in terms they understand, but you have to tell them the truth," he said. "They ask questions — 'Is he in jail?' — and things like that." Mr. Pike called Monday's unexpected delay an unfortunate aspect of the legal system.

— To reach Jeff Mitchell, e-mail jmitchell@erabanner.com



ANDREA PIKE

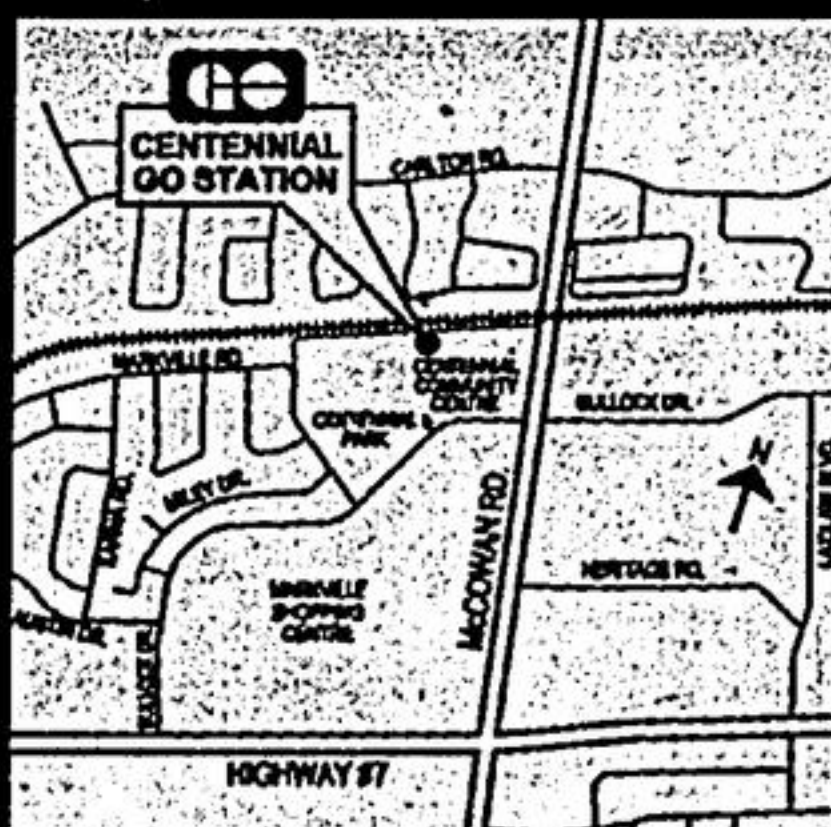
Died in May, 2000 crash on Woodbine Avenue.

GOODBYE GRIDLOCK. HELLO CENTENNIAL STATION.

On Tuesday, September 3rd, the new Centennial GO Station opens in Markham. The line will now serve Stouffville, Markham, Centennial, Unionville, Milliken, Agincourt and Union Station. Single-ride tickets and day passes may be purchased at ticket vending machines at the station. Other GO tickets and passes may be purchased at Union Station. The train platform, kiss-n-ride and parking area are behind the Markham Centennial Community Centre (enter off Bullock Drive). During off-peak hours and on weekends, express GO buses serve this line, with some trips to Uxbridge. Also effective September 3, our Highway 407 Express Bus service between Oakville and Unionville will be extended to the Markham GO station and Mount Joy (Hwy 48 & 16th Ave.) — the site of a future GO station. Of course, with these changes some bus & train schedules will be modified. For details, check our website, or just give us a call.

CENTENNIAL STATION WEEKDAY TRAINS SOUTHBOUND TO UNION STATION:

- 6:24 a.m. (arrive at Union at 7:05 a.m.)
- 7:02 a.m. (arrive at Union at 7:43 a.m.)
- 7:30 a.m. (arrive at Union at 8:16 a.m.)
- 8:41 a.m. (arrive at Union at 9:22 a.m.)
- 7:25 p.m. (arrive at Union at 8:06 p.m.)



CENTENNIAL STATION WEEKDAY TRAINS NORTHBOUND FROM UNION STATION:

- 4:54 p.m. (departs Union at 4:18 p.m.)
- 5:24 p.m. (departs Union at 4:48 p.m.)
- 5:56 p.m. (departs Union at 5:20 p.m.)
- 7:06 p.m. (departs Union at 6:30 p.m.)