

OPINION

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Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YRT's \$3.25 fare too high

Why can't York Region take it upon themselves to do what David Miller has now done down in Toronto, and freeze transit fares from being hiked any further.

Currently, the Toronto Transit Commission has a huge service area that can take you literally hours to get from one end to the other all for one fare: \$2.75. Yet, somehow York Region Transit has managed to convince people that it is justified to raise fares to \$3.25 for a service that is nowhere near the same level as what the TTC offers.

I don't understand how they think they can expand and gain new ridership if they keep raising fares to unreasonable levels. Charging \$3.25 to go anywhere one-way by bus is just simply a rip-off when compared to other transit services across North America.

What exactly are they introducing to the service that justifies this hike? I have not seen anything notable. The only new feature on the buses seems to be the not yet activated "next stop announcement" system.

A few years ago, Viva added TV screens to every bus on the system, only to have them all shut off now for no apparent reason. What a waste of money.

York Region must step in and put a stop to this nonsense.

RAFFI DERHAROUTIOUNIAN

Have the flu? Stay home

It's that time of year again: cold and flu season. Although the province has spent millions on flu shots, thousands are still sick each day. The problem?

People who are sick do not stay home and rest. Not only does this prolong the illness for themselves, it potentially spreads the virus to others around them; at school, at work or on the bus.

Why don't people stay home and rest? Many schools and employers' policies discourage this.

For example, I once took a course where participation marks were deducted as long as students were absent, despite having a doctor's note.

Many employers do not pay employees when they are sick and some even discourage sick workers from staying home.

The result is that not only the ill workers show up, but far too often, the virus spreads throughout the office and everyone is sick over the course of weeks.

These policies should be reviewed. Encouraging employees and students to stay home and rest not only helps the person recover more quickly, but also helps prevent the spread of colds and flu which ultimately spreads around the office, costing much more to the institution and the healthcare system.

EDWARD CHOI



Funeral director always had compliment for her employee

It was six years ago, while checking through classifieds in the Sun-Tribune, I spotted an advertisement that read: "Wanted - part-time help at the O'Neill Funeral Home, Stouffville. Apply in person to Robin Walsh, funeral director."

Having just completed a six-month trek to Toronto by train, bus and car, I was ready for a change - any change. And while working at a funeral home was the last thing I anticipated, I decided to give it a try.

"Why not," I said to myself, "after all, since I could soon be taking up three-day residency there, it might be appropriate to discover the inner workings of the place while still alive."

An appointment was made and an interview arranged.

While I'd seen Robin on several previous occasions, a funeral environment, I must admit, is not an appropriate place to discuss one's credentials. Mine or hers. But this was different. A one-on-one would provide an opportunity for us to size each other up.

I doubt she was impressed for, after all, a green blazer, brown pants and matching tie is not the type of apparel worn by most parlour employees. Not her employees anyway.

For she was immaculate in black - black jacket, black skirt, black shoes, black everything.

In contrast, I resembled a biblical Joseph in a collection of many colours.

But the miss-match didn't deter her warm welcome. Without saying so, a 10-minute tour indicated I'd been hired. But not without warning.

"You're absolutely sure this is where you want to work?" she asked.

I assured her it was. We've had an excellent relationship ever since.

However, all good things must come to an end.

On Dec. 19, Robin Walsh retired.

And while she'll continue to reside in Stouffville and, on occasion, assist at the funeral home, she'll now live a much quieter life away from 6324 Main St.

Her successor is Patrick Leb-



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

lanc of Whitby. Chris Davidson will remain his assistant.

Robin, 52, is a native of Kapuskasing, Ont. While still attending high school, she worked part-time at the Guennette Funeral Home there. "That's where I earned my stripes," she said.

Later she enrolled at Toronto's Humber College where, in 1975, she received her funeral director's license.

Robin apprenticed at Reid's Funeral Home, Leamington, before joining the staff of McDougall

and Brown, St. Clair Avenue and Bathurst Street, Toronto.

She remained there 12 years, six as manager. With the purchase of the O'Neill Funeral Home by Arbour in 1996, Robin came to Stouffville as a funeral director here, succeeding Polly and Fay Minton.

"I was a stranger in town," Robin recalls. "Cathy Sutherland, (a part-time employee), took me under her wing."

She remembers being welcomed by the late Dinty Hodgins and sharing dinner with Reg and Lorna But-ton.

These courtesies made her feel at home.

"I've been very happy here," she says, "but it's a very challenging position. I needed a rest."

She informed head office of her wish to retire last August after thinking about it almost a year.

"The death of a former colleague really bothered me," she admits. "This prompted my decision." He was only 52.

While demanding of herself, Robin always found time to share a tear with next-of-kin, a virtue that

found much favour with families. Framed photos of the late Marion Hodgson and the late Gladys Clarkson are prominent in the lobby at O'Neill's. "They were my friends," she says.

She was their friend, also.

Always a businesswoman with a desire for perfection, Robin also had a sympathetic side that only those with whom she associated would know.

For her, a funeral was not an end but a beginning. She knew the importance of follow-ups through phone calls, visits, letters and cards. People appreciated this.

No, I never solved the intricacies of an archaic light-switch panel and my coffee-making skills sometimes left much to be desired. But Robin never complained. Quite the opposite.

She was at all times complimentary.

This was the Robin Walsh I knew. This was the Robin Walsh I'll miss. We all will.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

LETTERS POLICY

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

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