

Home

If you were to ask me three years ago if I wanted to move, I would hesitate to say yes. I had dreams at a young age to grow up as quickly as possible, move out onto my own, live in the city, and somehow perfectly balance a work life, school life, and social life all at the same time like they do in the movies. I didn't want to let go of my friends at the time, but I knew we all would drift apart eventually with time and my life choices shouldn't be based around them. But, there was something daunting about that at the same time. I've built so many connections - not just with my friends, teachers, supervisors, but even a connection to my small bedroom. So, when my family collectively made the decision to move from Etobicoke to Waterloo, I was filled with mixed emotions.

A part of me was excited. I was able to live in a different environment and transition from a small community to a much bigger one. Not to mention the house I had moved into was much larger than my tiny suburban home. I would be able to make new friends and truly leave the small middle school drama that had occurred in the past. I felt as though I was suddenly ready to be the most idealistic person I've ever dreamt of and live the life I always wanted. Another part of me still held onto the sentimental memories I made in that community.

Looking back, I was involved a lot back in my old middle school. I went there from kindergarten to grade 7 before moving to Waterloo to finish grade 8, then transitioning to high school. I was a part of the tech committee, which essentially helped out with setting up the projectors and equipment for assemblies. Additionally, I participated in other clubs that allowed for me to socialize with people of different ages and make new friends in the process. I practically grew up in Etobicoke my whole life and suddenly leaving all of that behind was something I didn't want to let go of so easily.

To this day, I still think about that familiar path I'd take to walk home from the bus stop. The bus stopped at the sign with the neighbourhood name on it. There was an awful amount of trees on people's front yards so during the fall, the leaves would turn orange and yellow and the sun would always gleam through the branches. Back then, my tiny body and mind thought that this neighbourhood was the place to be. Everything had seemed much bigger than me and of course, my young mind thought that bigger always meant better. The neighbourhood was located across a mall, which was a good ten minute walk away from my house. Additionally, there was a grocery store in the plaza right beside it, being convenient for our family's last minute endeavors. I'd have to pass two intersections before finally turning onto the road where my house remained. I had the continuous thought that I was almost home the minute I turned that corner, whether that'd be in a car ride home or me walking back.

Today, that feeling applies to a different environment. I live behind a large recreational center and in order to get to my neighbourhood, you have to pass by it. There is a small plaza right beside the entrance to the neighbourhood with one or two

restaurants and a family bakery. Every time the vehicle I'm in drives past the recreational center or every time I walk by that plaza, I have the feeling that I'm almost home. Just one or two more minutes and I'd be able to open the doors to the place I now rest in.

I had promised my best friend at the time that we would be inseparable, that we'd go to the same high school then college and still remain friends. We knew that our friendship wouldn't be as strong as it was as time progresses, but we still wanted to keep in touch and be together. There was this unreadable look of sadness across her face when I told her I was moving to a city an hour or two away from Etobicoke. It took her a while to fully let the news sink in, but instead of spending the rest of our time together sulking, she wanted to make our friendship memorable while she could. Her last birthday present to me was this cliché best friend heart keychain where she would have half of the heart and I would have the other. Ironically, I don't need keys as my house has a passcode lock where I punch in the numbers to open the door, but I still keep it on my keys and put it on my bedside table.

The day after the last day of school, I moved to Waterloo. Seeing the house I grew up in so empty brought a sentimental feeling to my heart. I was *truly* going to have a new beginning in a different environment that I had no clue about. Surprisingly, I didn't cry despite being the emotional human being that I am. Perhaps it was due to the enjoyable car ride with my brothers down the highways during the summer, singing to nostalgic songs playing on the radio, or maybe it was my excitement to live in a bigger house. It took a while to adjust to practically everything. The routes to reach home, the community around me, how everything wasn't so convenient anymore, and it would be a 15 minute walk and a 10 minute bus ride to reach the nearest mall.

I'd say it took me a year or so to fully adjust to the new community. It was odd being known as the girl that moved to Waterloo. It was odd moving in general, as it was my first time even doing such a thing. As time continued to move and I spent more days in the city, those were my days of pure adolescence. Not that I'm saying I'm an adult now, but I was being given more responsibility to take care of myself and begin to mature more. My mom gave me the permission to learn how to take the bus so I could bus to work without relying on her. With that, I learned the roads of Waterloo better than I did in Etobicoke. There'd be small areas to the city that I found myself killing time at or simply just admiring. Some days I'd wonder if I would have been able to do the same things in Etobicoke.

Within the first year of moving to Waterloo, my family did often take trips to visit our old house. Though it was already sold and we obviously couldn't go inside it, whenever we were near the neighbourhood, we couldn't help ourselves but stop by the old house I grew up in. At first, it was odd. Suddenly, when I saw the neighbourhood sign at the entrance, I no longer thought that I was home. I knew that my home was now an hour away from this place, but I was filled with a sentimental feeling of nostalgia. Seeing the house I grew up in for 14 years of my life suddenly belong to someone else felt off, but then again, I no longer felt as though that house was my home anymore.

Believe it or not, I've had one or two dreams where I'd move back to Etobicoke. In those dreams, I imagined reuniting with my old friends and seeing all my old teachers again but for some reason, it felt off. Suddenly the streets outside weren't as clean as they were in Waterloo and the cafe spots that I've always admired weren't there anymore. Despite living in Waterloo now, I claim that I want to move back, perhaps not to Etobicoke again, but to a city near Toronto. I miss being close to large shopping centers and other recreational areas and I most definitely missed the field trips I was able to go on because of the location I lived in.

Nevertheless, I've settled in Waterloo for god knows how long. Maybe one day I will return back to a city closer to Toronto and experience new feelings there. I'll find new spots that I could admire and learn more about it than I did in Waterloo. I'll miss some things about Waterloo, but I'll also find small details about the city that I'll come to treasure and adore. As for now, I remain in this city. And when the car I'm in suddenly passes by the plaza beside my neighbourhood, I know I'll almost home.