

Port Hope Police decision will affect Cramahe



Written by Bob Owen

Tuesday, 26 February 2013 00:20

A decision by the Port Hope Police Services Board to close its communications department will have a direct affect on Cramahe's emergency services.

The board decided unanimously to approve a ten-year plan which included closure of the department as of December 31, 2013. We asked Cramahe Fire Chief Brandon Northrup how this would impact his operations. Cramahe's fire department is dispatched to emergencies by the Port Hope Communications Department.

Chief Northrup explained that the approximately 250 fire department call outs each year are taken by the Port Hope Police. Ambulance calls for the township are directed by the Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) in Lindsay. As of midnight on December 31 there will be no dispatch service for Cramahe fire calls unless a replacement service is found.

The chief admits this needs to be ironed out and explained on February 25 that he is actively considering the alternatives, including a county-wide emergency call centre. Fire chiefs have been considering the concept for years and now may be the time to do it. As it stands there are three call centres for fire calls in Northumberland. Port Hope, Hamilton Township and Cramahe use the Port Hope Police Service. Cobourg and Alnwick/Haldimand use the Cobourg Police Force. Brighton and Trent Hills use a private company, TAS-PAGE Communications.

If fire department dispatch does go county-wide, it could end up in the hands of the Cobourg Police Department. The 2013 Northumberland County Clerk's Department Business Plan and Budget states asking the Cobourg force is considering the costs of running the emergency dispatch for the county.

Chief Northrup can see the advantages of a county-wide system. It would simplify the mutual aid arrangements where adjoining municipalities help each other out in emergencies. Cramahe now has to deal with two other dispatch companies when assisting its neighbours. Having one dispatcher would improve the communications between fire departments during emergencies.

A private company could be used but there are potential issues with some