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Region told of offloading delays

STEPHANIE THIESSEN
Special to The IFP

Halton Emergency Medical Services' (EMS) track record of quick response times might be in jeopardy if a systemic health-care issue that just recently hit Halton isn't resolved.

Hospital offloading delays have affected Halton's surrounding areas— as well as communities across Canada— for several years, but weren't an issue here until this past December.

Offloading delays occur when a hospital's at capacity and can't provide a bed for a patient brought in by ambulance. Paramedics must therefore continue providing care to the patient at the hospital, usually in the emergency department hallway, preventing the ambulance from leaving and being used for another emergency.

These delays and their impact on ambulance availability were discussed at Halton Region's health and social services committee recently, with a report submitted by staff and a presentation made by Greg Sage, manager of program development and quality improvement for Halton Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

"Our response times haven't been affected negatively thus far," Sage explained after the meeting. "The report's more to say the potential's there."

A single offload delay can range anywhere from 30 minutes to four hours, Sage said, adding the average delay is just over an hour.

On one or two occasions since December, no ambulances were available for emergency calls, Sage explained. Recently, only one out of 13 ambulances were ready for a call.

Emergency plans are in place for situations like this, and include sending out emergency response units staffed by supervisors and managers until an ambulance is available. Vehicles from surrounding areas are also deployed, but they're frequently unable to help because of their own offloading delays, committee heard.

Since 2001, Halton EMS's response time has been below the mandated standard.

The potential for delayed response times is serious, Sage said.

"We know from research that a timely response has a significant impact on patient survival," Sage said.

He said he's not sure why the delays started in December, and that it's probably a combination of factors, including fuller hospitals due to the onset of flu season.

In December, 825 hours of offload delay were recorded, with 812 hours in January, the report reads.

"This amount of time is equivalent to more than two ambulances being out of service for an entire 12-hour shift every day during the months of December and January," it states.

In January 2006, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced an investment of \$96 million to reduce such delays and wait times in emergency rooms.

Regional Chairman Gary Carr said the back-up at hospitals, which is affecting ambulances, is just one of the reasons why the Fairness for Halton campaign is so important. The initiative aims to raise awareness about the funds that will be needed to make way for the 300,000-plus residents the Province's Places to Grow plan designates for Halton— funds that'll be particularly needed for area hospitals.

"Unless the Province addresses our concerns with the Places to Grow Plan, offloading delays at hospitals will continue to get worse with our growing communities," Carr said.

In an effort to address the offloading delays, regional council approved a motion that calls for Carr to write a letter to Smitherman asking for patient destination software to be implemented at the Mississauga Central Ambulance Communications Centre.

The City of Toronto EMS developed the software in 2004. It lets paramedics know which hospital is best to offload patients, in turn avoiding many ambulances transporting patients to the same hospital.

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NOTICE OF SALE OF VACANT LAND

The Corporation of the Town of Caledon is offering that part of the East Half of Lot 12, Concession 5 E.H.S. in the former Township of Caledon that is shown as Part 2 on Plan 43R-12413 for sale. The property has approximately 600 feet of frontage on Mountainview Road. The property has an overall width of approximately 1,000 feet and a depth of approximately 2,195 feet. The area of the property is approximately 44 acres. The property is vacant. It is located in the Niagara Escarpment Rural Area. The Bruce Trail runs along the southerly boundary of the property. The location of the property is shown on the map below.

Information packages with respect to the property, including a survey, may be obtained at the Legal Services Department at the Town of Caledon Town Hall, 6311 Old Church Road, Caledon East, Ontario. The information packages include forms for the submission of offers for the property.

Offers must be received in the Legal Services Department at the Town of Caledon Town Hall, 6311 Old Church Road, Caledon East, Ontario by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, June 1, 2007.

The Town reserves the right not to accept the highest or any offer for the property.

In order to have an information package sent to you, or for further information regarding the property, you may telephone Jennifer Dalglisch at (905) 584-2272, Extension 4120, or e-mail her at jennifer.dalglisch@caledon.ca

Dated at Caledon, Ontario this 30th day of April, 2007.



NOTICE OF SALE OF VACANT LAND

The Corporation of the Town of Caledon is offering that part of the West Half of Lot 12, Concession 5 E.H.S. in the former Township of Caledon that is shown as Part 1 on Plan 43R-5029 for sale. The property has approximately 295 feet of frontage on St. Andrew's Road. The property has an overall width of approximately 1,090 feet and a depth of approximately 2,200 feet. The area of the property is approximately 49 acres. The property is vacant. It is located in the Niagara Escarpment Rural Area. The Bruce Trail runs along the southerly boundary of the property. The location of the property is shown on the map below.

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