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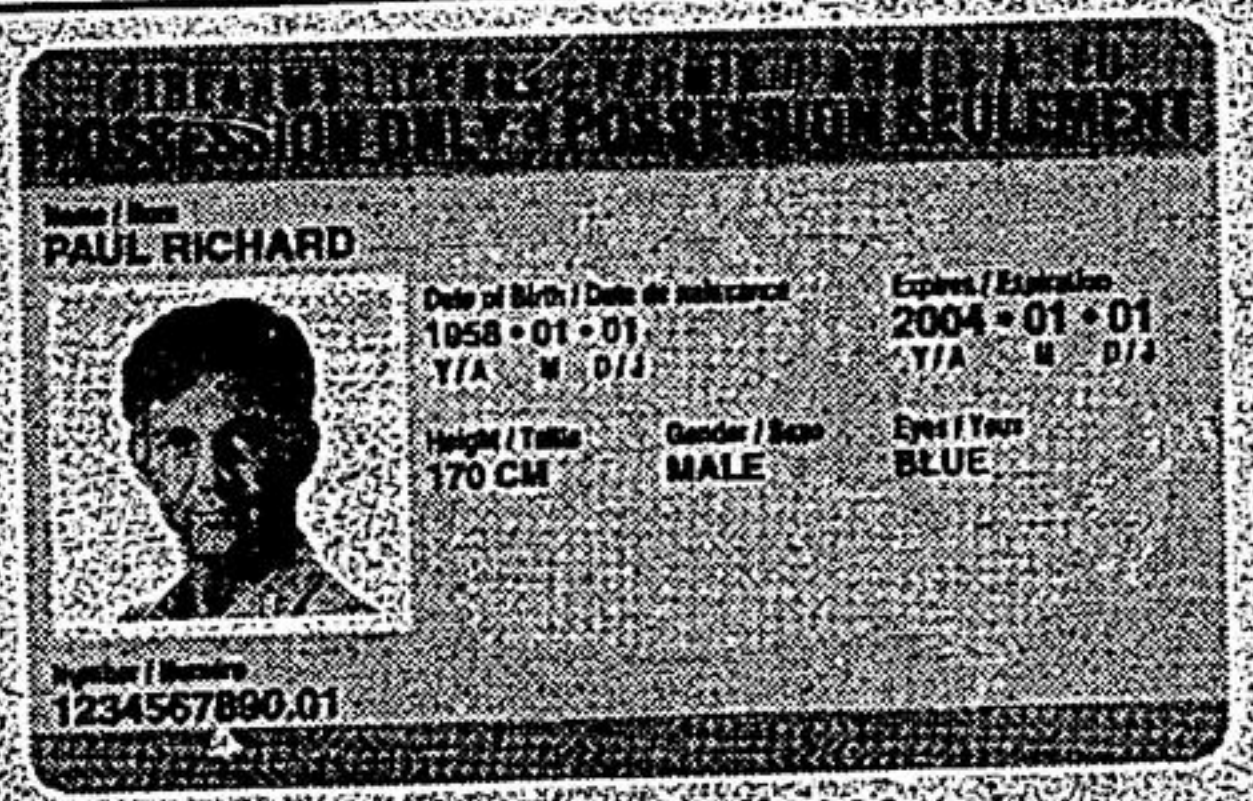
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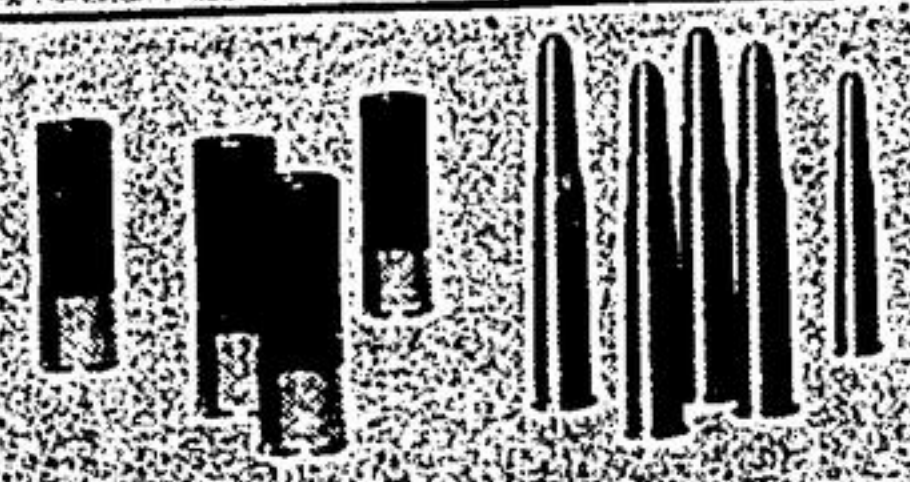
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Emergency turf war ending

Dispatch centre for emergency services slated for Markham or Vaughan

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

A single dispatch centre for police, fire, ambulance and 911 in York Region could get informal approval as early as this week.

"It makes absolute sense that we all be together somewhere," said Newmarket Fire Chief John Molyneux, York's regional fire co-ordinator.

He argues one central facility — probably located in Markham or Vaughan — would be better able to co-ordinate emergency response than the jumbled system now in place.

York Regional Police officers are currently dispatched from the police communications centre in Newmarket.

Paramedics are dispatched by provincially operated ambulance centres in Barrie, Mississauga and Oshawa.

Firefighters are dispatched by centres in Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Markham.

All 911 calls are now handled by Bell Canada's 911 centre in Ottawa, which then transfers them to the appropriate local dispatch centre.

Moving to a central dispatch centre is requiring a change of heart by fire officials.

They are now looking at scrapping the idea of setting up a temporary fire communications centre in Newmarket's three-year-old firehall on McCaffrey Road.

The centre was to be used until a permanent location could be established.

The region acknowledged 30 years ago a central fire dispatch centre was needed, but political turf wars have prevented it from being built.

That's why Aurora Fire Chief Joe Hunwicks said the McCaffrey dispatch centre was appealing — at least, it showed officials could finally agree on a temporary facility.

But even the interim centre was never implemented, thanks in part to competing interests.

The delay has opened the door to a central communications facility for all emergency personnel. Although the concept was first floated years ago, the timing may be perfect now for a number of reasons, including:

- The new push by fire officials for a permanent central facility.
- Lobbying by York's Emergency Medical Services, which took over ambulances in January, to wrest control of ambulance dispatch away from the province.

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CORRECTION NOTICE

We wish to draw your attention to the following in our current '2000 Annual Catalogue':

Page 376 - Item #6: Reese Draw Bars, 40-6000X
Copy reads: Fits all hitches on page 377
2" Drop ball platform, 5000-lb capacity.
Each 30.99 - 69.99.
Should read: Fits all class III hitches on page 377. Each 30.99 - 104.99.

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