

Plan to customize York Region ambulance service under way

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

York Region's Emergency Medical Services staff is creating a plan to customize ambulance service for 725,000 residents after taking over the program from the province earlier this year.

Included in the review will be upgrading and relocating several of the 12 ambulance stations located within the region to improve safety and decrease response times.

"We inherited an ambulance system from the province that wasn't expressly designed to fit the needs of our fast-growing and dynamic region," pointed out Vaughan Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio, chairperson of the health and social services committee.

"Our residents will certainly become better serviced under a regional service."

Although York Region has assumed control of ambulance services, the province has not officially transferred the ambulance dispatch function to municipalities.

For several months, the region has been pushing to gain control of the dispatch, insisting it has the tools to deliver the most efficient service to approximately 60,000 EMS responses each year. Of those requests, about 75 per cent arise from emergency situations.

A report outlining the details of a three-year optimization plan for ambulance station development will be presented to the committee in August.

York adopts growth plan

York Region council has taken steps to better manage its pace of growth after adopting a growth management action plan and updating its official plan to cover a new 25-year planning horizon.

The policy, which will include initiatives until 2026, includes the preparation of a transportation master plan, a comprehensive annual review of the

region's 10-year capital plan, the creation of a computerized system that stores and maps development application data, and the co-ordination of development with school boards, York Regional Police, the region's three hospitals and other service providers.

The elements of the plan will ensure development of important services, such as roads, sewers, parks, schools and hospitals, keeps pace with the demands of one of Canada's fastest-growing populations.

At the same time, the approach is aimed to protect and enhance natural environment areas.

"This planning framework will allow the region to forge ahead into the next quarter century with confidence and efficiency," said Markham Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti, chairperson of the planning committee.

Meanwhile, the official plan now contains updated planning forecasts that predict a regional population of 1.28 million residents and 696,000 jobs over the next 25 years.

Provincial legislation requires that official plans be reviewed at least once every five years to ensure they are responsive to the changing needs of the community.

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