

It doesn't matter - until it matters

Written by **Sheralyn Roman**

A topic making the rounds lately, both in local media and rather extensively, on social media, is the issue of ambulance / paramedic coverage in Caledon. It's a hot-button topic garnering plenty of opinion, a great deal of rhetoric, factual statements, letters to the editor and even, advertising dollars being spent in abundance. Regardless of your position on the matter, what matters most is that you become informed about the discussion that is taking place because my fear right now, more than anything, is that too many of us think this is an issue that doesn't matter. When will it matter? When you dial 911 because you or a family member is in urgent need of care.

Knowledge is power folks. Knowledge gained by asking questions, thoroughly researching the facts and listening to more than one source of information to ensure as accurate and fulsome an understanding as possible. Knowledge means not just listening to those fuming on Facebook, the politicians, the union members, the union leaders, the call centre staff or even ? the paramedics. Knowledge means listening to all of these sources. Should the citizens of Caledon be concerned about changes to the method in which ambulances are dispatched and/or where they are coming from? How long (under the old system) did it take for an ambulance to arrive on your doorstep and how long will it take under the new system? More than anything ? I believe this to be the primary issue.

Caledon is over 700 square kilometres with many gravel roads, isolated homes on large country estates and suburban pockets that are also served by fire and/or volunteer firefighters. It would be an unfair assumption to think that an emergency call placed from Terra Cotta, or Belfountain (for example) would experience the same call response time as someone who dialed for assistance from Valleywood which houses a volunteer fire station. Presumably, when one is looking for a home, in addition to schools, parks, access to employment opportunities and community services, one also considers the location in relation to available emergency services and/or hospitals. I'm not suggesting you limit your choice of home according to your health but common sense demands we be realistic about managing our expectations after calling for help from a geographically isolated location. In other words, is your response time really changing? I'm not sure we know the answer.

As I said at the outset however, none of this matters, until it matters. Perhaps the possibility of requiring ambulance services wasn't high on your list of home purchase priorities. Maybe your health has taken a turn for the worse making the prospect of calling a paramedic a more likely possibility. Children run scary high fevers, seniors fall, and a heart attack respects neither time nor distance travelled. In other words, the issue of Ambulance / Paramedic services matters to all of us. I urge you to come out to one of the information sessions taking place. There's still time to make an educated and informed decision based on the issue as you understand it and if you feel further advocacy is necessary ? take an active role in the conversation. Your life very well could depend on it.