

## Peel Paramedics hosting three open houses in January

Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

Peel Paramedics will be hosting three public education sessions to discuss their new divisional model.

The transition will happen in January 2019. Paramedics that used to report to work in Caledon Village and Bolton will now attend a reporting station in Brampton.

Regional council asked us to educate the Caledon community about upcoming council endorsed changes to our divisional model, said Brian Gibson, deputy chief of Peel Regional Paramedic Services in an email interview. Caledon is one of the last areas to move into the divisional model, which has been in place in others areas for some time. Public drop-ins are part of our approach to meet council's direction.

Meetings will happen on Saturday, Jan. 5 2019 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness, Saturday, Jan. 12 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Mayfield Recreation Complex and on Saturday, Jan. 19 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Albion Bolton Community Centre.

The drop-in sessions are designed to be informal, so residents can get answers to their individual questions, said Gibson. We hope to chat with lots of people and provide them the information they are looking for to ease their minds.

The move has caused a lot of uproar online with many residents, and working paramedics questioning the validity of the plan, according to Citizen archives. Many believe paramedics starting in Brampton will receive calls for that city and Mississauga. They also believe paramedics will be too away for calls in Caledon, especially in rural areas.

Further, an online petition, started by Laurie Raynard, directed to Mayor Allan Thompson, Peel Regional Paramedic Services Chief and Director Peter Dundas and Nancy Polsinelli, commissioner of health services for Peel Region has received 823 signatures, stating this relocation of paramedic crews to Brampton and Mississauga locales will without question, according to those working inside of the system, cause serious and potentially life threatening delays and circumstances including an increase in timely access to emergent care from primary and advanced care paramedics and a complete failure of the system for residents in the Town of Caledon.

No-one should live in fear because of misinformation circulating in the community, said Gibson. Caledon has been and will continue to be prioritized for ambulance service delivery because of its unique geography. We want to give residents the truth, so they can understand that the only thing changing is where paramedics report to work. The same number of ambulances and paramedics assigned to Caledon today will be in Caledon once the system changes on January 14. And the number of ambulances will increase as call volumes and Caledon grows.

During each shift, ambulances are moved into zones to cover for other ambulances that respond to calls. This is done on a minute-to-minute basis to make sure paramedics are in the right place at the right time, according to a news release.

Dundas refuted the statements saying the first two ambulances that start at 5:30 a.m. every day will be assigned to Caledon. They will replace the ambulances in Caledon that will be coming off a shift at 7 a.m. This will happen again with the night shifts.

The release states that during a life-threatening emergency, the closest ambulance will respond with the next available ambulance replaces it. If the replacement ambulances receive a call, another one is sent over. Dispatchers will also look for the closest ambulance in Dufferin, Simcoe, York and Halton to move closer to Caledon Border.

Local 277 Paramedics have stated that they do not, and have never, supported this change running advertisements in town

newspapers information residents they want to keep paramedics in Caledon.

They state call volume in Caledon has grown 263% in the last ten years and that the system is not perfect. ?That is why the Peel Paramedic Union is advocating for a plan that brings a divisional book on station to Caledon by 2022. Enhancements that account for this growth in call volume will ensure the residents of Caledon are covered effectively,? according to their website.