



DEEP RIVER - Dignitaries gathered here Wednesday to officially open Renfrew County's newest land ambulance station.

The sparkling new paramedic base station on Banting Drive was hailed as an example of what can happen when levels of government collaborate effectively. The \$750,000 project, which had been approved this past spring with construction commencing in May, was completed on time and under budget.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was attended by county officials, municipal leaders and members of the County of Renfrew Paramedic Service, who will now call the station home as they serve the North Renfrew region which includes Deep River, the Town of Laurentian Hills and the townships of Head, Clara and Maria. Attending the ceremony was Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Cheryl Gallant and MPP John Yakabuski.

"This facility is a welcomed addition to the community and it will help to provide excellent emergency services for the future and for future generations," said County Warden Peter Emon.

Although he was out of town, Deep River Mayor David Thompson passed on his congratulations via a pre-taped video. He praised Michael Nolan, director of paramedic services, for his vision in seeing a permanent land ambulance base established in the county's north.

"In Mike's business every minute counts and by locating this paramedic station here beside the Deep River and District Hospital, there absolutely will be lives saved," said Thompson.

In his remarks, Nolan said this was a special day to celebrate the communities that his paramedics serve.

"I hope they are better for having a base station and paramedics more central to the entire community," said Nolan.

The station's relocation from Chalk River is anticipated to improve response times. The Ministry of Health has mandated through the Ambulance Act that the 90th percentile response time be used as a benchmark to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of a land ambulance service. The 90th percentile response time is a calculation to determine the amount of time with which an ambulance service must respond to an emergency call, nine out of 10

times. The calculation is based on a numerical sort of the response times for all Code 4 calls (life threatening), from the shortest to the longest response time.

"This new paramedic base station is a major step forward in achieving such goals," said Head, Clara, Maria Reeve Tammy Stewart.

The paramedics assigned to North Renfrew had been working out of the Laurentian Hills fire station in Chalk River since 2003. In 2012, the total number of calls handled by the Chalk River base was 1,574. Out of that base, there were 162 Code 3 calls and 390 Code 4 calls during the past year. However, the majority of Code 3 and Code 4 calls, those to non-life threatening and life-threatening emergencies respectively, came from Deep River. In 2011, for example, Deep River received 447 calls, while Laurentian Hills received 298. Laurentian Hills Mayor Dick Rabishaw said he supported the move noting its new location places it central to his municipality.

"Based on the research data compiled by the paramedic, it is more suitable to be located in this area," he said. "Response time will be even better."

The county had previously built land ambulance stations in Petawawa, Barry's Bay and Arnprior. Chief administrative officer Jim Hutton thanked contractor Argue Construction for building an operationally efficient facility, as well as property and development director Paul Moreau and project manager Kevin Valiquette.

Sean Chase is a Daily Observer multimedia journalist

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