

Aurora requests Police provide designated safe spaces for Classified buys

By Brock Weir

Any transaction stemming from a classified ad is always a matter of 'buyer beware' but as safety concerns regarding meeting strangers to complete online transactions mount, the York Regional Police should take action to make these concerns a thing of the past.

At least, according to Aurora Council.

Councillors approved a motion from Councillor Tom Mrakas last week calling on York Regional Police to designate areas at local police stations to provide a supervised, monitored space for these transactions to go down.

'There is always a risk when meeting a stranger in person,' said Councillor Mrakas in his motion. 'Designated exchange areas in police stations, such as a couple of parking spots, would help residents safely conduct these transactions.'

The motion called on the Town of Aurora to make a request to the York Regional Police Services Board, the Regional body overseeing the delivery of police services throughout York, to review 'the possibility of designating areas in police stations' or at their Aurora headquarters 'for residents to meet buyers and sellers of online classified ads.

York going down this route, he said, would follow in the footsteps of Peel and legislation working its way through the City of Toronto.

'I have just reworked some of what [Toronto] Councillor Norm Kelly put forward' to speak specifically to York Region and Aurora,' said Councillor Mrakas at last Tuesday's Council meeting. 'I think it makes sense, especially in this day and age. A lot of people are doing business and transactions online and you don't know who you are meeting. I think to give them a place where you can feel safe and make these transactions is a good thing, to have somewhere where it is safe for our residents to do this. It is only happening more and more and, for me, it is a no-brainer.'

Speaking to his motion, the Councillor amended what he put forward calling on the motion to be circulated to the eight other York Region municipalities for their consideration and support as well. It was a move which found support around the Council table, with members moving to ensure the results of what the Police Services Board decides are communicated back to Council.

'I think this is very good for our residents,' said Councillor John Abel. 'For my son and daughter, this is how they do business and I am stunned sometimes when my son says, 'Oh, I got this.' I actually don't want to know, but I should know, and I think this is a really good Notice of Motion.'

Added Councillor Sandra Humfries: 'This is exactly what my kids do. My son was meeting someone here and there and something strange was happening and he left the place. I am thankful that this is being brought forward, knowing kids ourselves who can utilize this safe space to do business.'