

\$3m plan to bring in LED streetlights poised for green light

By Brock Weir

A \$3.3 million plan to convert all of Aurora's streetlights to new LED technology in a bid to save electrical cost in the long run is set to move forward this week, but Council wants to ensure they're still getting the best bang for their buck.

Council approved the Town-wide replacement of street lights to light emitting diode (LED) models earlier this year in a bid to find a longer-lasting product, as well as one which would pay for itself in energy savings in the long run.

After approving a \$3 million budget for the conversion, Aurora bought into a program facilitated by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to get a good deal based on the collective purchasing power of several municipalities going the same route at the same time.

"The LED model does not need to be done to maintain service levels, but rather should be done to capture electricity and maintenance efficiencies of the new technology available," said Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, noting Council will also have to make a final decision this week on how to fund the project, should they opt to move forward. "LED street lighting is a viable option for reducing energy consumption and environmental impacts related to greenhouse gas production, as well as reducing operating costs to the Town.

But, with the volatility of LED costs, as well as the rapid advancements in technology, Council wants assurances the AMO model is still the right path forward.

"I want to have a sense of confidence; it is a \$3 million price tag," said Councillor Michael Thompson, asking for further information on what other municipalities are doing and what it is ultimately costing them. "It is a question that is going to be asked of us. In addition, it is all revolving around the business case for return on investment. The numbers talk about a savings of \$361,000 a year, but that seems to be a 10-year payback. I am a little concerned that the warranty on these products is 10 years as well. We could potentially be in the position whereby we just got the payback, or are just finishing it off, and the warranty is expired."

According to Mr. Simanovskis, the AMO model lends confidence they are going a route that is being systematically applied throughout the province, and it provides an economical solution backed by expertise.

Other Councillors agreed more information was needed before they can make a decision at this week's Council meeting, but the benefits to the community in moving forward with the LED conversion are clear.

"It is a hefty investment, but I don't think we really have much choice in this direction," said Councillor Sandra Humfries.

Added Councillor John Abel: "We will realise savings over and over again as this goes forward, especially with the expected energy increases from the Province, which is crippling our economy. I think to save money, it is prudent to find savings in energy and LED is the way to go.

"This is a new technology and it is rapidly changing. [AMO] went back out in 2014 to make sure what they provided to the municipality as a tender was in fact the best tendering process. We are asking for some of the metrics. If there are already 100 municipalities that have already used the AMO LED recommendation then we are on the right path for quality and cost, and the product is the best for the best price and can be delivered.

"Often we can be promised a good price, but the delivery of service is a whole other matter. It is a great investment that is well overdue."