

Aurora to get tougher on door-to-door sales, but enforcement could be at issue

By Brock Weir

The Town of Aurora will work together with York Regional Police to raise awareness of issues surrounding door-to-door salespeople but while Council approved new measures to get tougher and more up-to-date on sales, enforcement might be at issue.

Last week, Council gave the green light a public information session held in conjunction with the YRP to educate the public. Coupled with this, Council moved to amend existing bylaws to bring them in step with 2016 laws already on the books from the 1950s speak to "hawkers" and "peddlers", not recognizing the current roles and occupations of door-to-door-salespeople and limiting the hours such people can go door-to-door to between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

"I think this gives the public a little bit of reassurance that if someone shouldn't be attending after 8 p.m., especially seniors who might be reticent about going to the door, if they have any concerns about someone coming to their door after 8 p.m., they can give us a call," said the Bylaw department at last week's Council meeting.

But, there is always a "but."

"It is difficult to enforce any part of this bylaw because it is reactive. The enforcement might be a difficult thing because of the hours our bylaw officers work at this point in time."

Council began looking at their bylaws surrounding door-to-door sales last fall. They directed staff to come back with a report on a new bylaw that would not only control these sales, but also look at solicitation and distribution of advertising.

In the report, Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Bylaw Services, said her department had not received any concerns or complaints from residents, but education would enhance the safety of Aurorans.

"Staff is committed to the wellbeing of Aurora residents and believe the best protection and defence to unethical, misleading and/or aggressive door-to-door salespersons is to be educated on your rights as a consumer and be aware of suspicious or unwanted activity," she said in her report.

"Door-to-door sales, solicitation and distribution of materials are transient activities. They occur at a given property for a period of time. Enforcement activities are either complaint driven or initiated by an officer where it is known that a violation has occurred. It will be extremely challenging to achieve compliance with a bylaw that attempts to regulate transient activities."

Nevertheless, Council forged ahead with the crackdown citing the positive benefits of more stringent rules.

"I think we need to be proactive," said Councillor Tom Mrakas, one of the councillors who spurred the report in question last fall. "I understand we haven't had any complaints as of yet, but I think we have each individually had some complaints that haven't been brought to the Town. I think we need to be proactive and put some stuff in place. The policy was developed back in 1950 with a few amendments over the years. It is time we update it to be more current."