

Council says no to chipping into Hamilton's Canada Post appeal

By Brock Weir

Earlier this year, Aurora joined Hamilton's fight to exercise more municipal control on where and how Canada Post can install community mailboxes on municipal rights of way.

But, with Hamilton's fight being shot down in Federal courts, should municipalities like Aurora who supported their fight, chip in a few bucks to help towards their legal bills? According to Council, that answer is a firm no.

Councillors responded last week to a request from Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger asking for financial assistance to help the city mount its appeal.

Supporting the request at last week's General Committee meeting last week was Councillor Tom Mrakas, who was the leading voice around the Council table in holding Canada Post to task. As Aurora's fight resulted in an agreement with the Crown Corporation compelling Canada Post to obtain individual permits at \$50 a pop for the placement of each community mailbox, resulting in over \$9,000 in revenue into Town coffers, Councillor Mrakas argued a \$2,000 contribution would be reasonable.

“Considering what the City of Hamilton has done, they are, in essence, fighting for the rights of all municipalities across the country,” he said. “I think considering the [Federation of Canadian Municipalities] has jumped on board looking to get intervenor status, us kicking in \$2,000 to help out for our rights and this fight I think is worth it.

“We have done it in other areas where we have used the Council Contingency [Fund] for \$2,000 to help fund a party and other stuff. I think [if we're] fighting for the rights of our rights of way and other municipalities, I don't think \$2,000 is a bad thing.”

This was a view shared and seconded by Councillor Sandra Humfries, who said Hamilton had taken the lead in this issue.

“I just believe the City of Hamilton has done a lot of work to raise the bar on this issue and raise the exposure of what is happening,” she said. “\$2,000 of support demonstrates our town appreciates what they are doing and we will reap the benefits if things turn out positively for them.”

Others, however, didn't see things that way. While Councillor Michael Thompson said it is not unreasonable to say a portion of the revenue Aurora will reap from its deal with Canada Post should go to Hamilton in recognition of their efforts, fellow members said this was not the proper use of what is ultimately public money.

“I don't think it is a good use of our taxpayer funding to start funding legal battles other municipalities have initiated without consulting us,” said Councillor John Abel. “We were never asked. We did take a stand, and I appreciate we did that because I have seen the Montreal mayor with a jackhammer taking out one of the platforms, but with all the costs and all the things we have done, this just goes backwards against what we're doing.”

A similar view was offered by Councillor Paul Pirri, who said “collecting taxes to give to another municipality” didn't sit well with him at all.

“If the Mayor and the City of Hamilton weren't prepared to move forward with this understanding they were going to be the holders of the full cost, maybe they shouldn't have gone through with it,” said Councillor Pirri. “If they are just asking for a handout, I don't see why [we] would be doing that. If Hamilton is going to go forward with this, by all means go forward with this. It doesn't mean we should be funding it through our taxpayers to do so.

“There is no benefit to our residents for us to be chipping in a couple of thousand. Why would we be engaging in something where there is no benefit to our taxpayers?”