

Town strikes deal with Canada Post over community mailboxes

By Brock Weir

As things get heated between Canada Post and greater Montreal on the placement of community mailboxes, the situation in Aurora has become decidedly cooler after the municipality inked a deal with the Crown Corporation.

Aurora will be able to exercise a degree of approval over the placement of community mailboxes through an agreement which will see Canada Post pay a \$50 fee for each community mailbox slated for installation this month. But, with this agreement, more community mailboxes than initially expected, will become a reality ? up to 142 from the originally forecasted 127.

It might not be the best deal, according to a report before Council from Town Solicitor Warren Mar, who notes the current minimum permit fee is \$128, it is the best deal that Aurora can expect, given recent legal disputes between Canada Post and the City of Hamilton, where the courts ruled the postal service has every right to proceed with installation.

?While Canada Post's position [is] it has full authority to install community mailboxes in municipal rights-of-way, it is willing to cooperate with municipalities and municipal requirements,? said Warren Mar, Solicitor for the Town of Aurora, in a report to Council. ?In recognition of the ongoing work of Town staff to review the Canada Post installation plans, Canada Post is offering a fee of \$50 per location where a community mailbox is installed as part of its delivery conversion program.

?While this amount is below the current minimum fee and Canada Post is not willing to provide securities for its works on Town property, the contractor for Canada Post has fulfilled the other material requirements of the permit process under the bylaw. Given the state of the law in this jurisdictional matter between Canada Post and municipalities, Town staff are prepared to recommend acceptance of Canada Post's offer and willingness to generally abide by the permit process.?

Included with this is an installation agreement which sets out the term and conditions in which issues are addressed should municipalities like Aurora object to the placement of a particular box. Although the fees could have been better, argued some members of Council, there was a sense of satisfaction they had ratified an agreement.

This satisfaction came on the heels of a heated discussions with Canada Post representatives around the Council table last month, bookended by a campaign led in large part by Councillor Tom Mrakas to raise awareness of Aurora's objections to the post office moving along at full force with a perceived lack of public consultation.

?This is pretty much what I asked the two gentlemen who came before is ? a scenario if we put the fee at \$50 if they would apply for a permit, we would issue those permits except for a handful we would still work on together and have that consultation,? said Councillor Mrakas. ?They really didn't answer us, as we know, that night and here we are and this is exactly what we're doing. I'm thrilled and it shows we did something.

?We took the residents' rights and concerns, we enacted a bylaw and we're here at this place ? even though we're not getting the exact fee we wanted, Canada Post is applying for a permit in the Town of Aurora and I think that is great.?

Councillors Wendy Gaertner, Sandra Humfries and Michael Thompson praised Councillor Mrakas, noting it was important to loudly raise these concerns.

?It does prove a very good point ? if we hadn't tried, we wouldn't have gotten this far,? said Councillor Gaertner.

Added Councillor Thompson: ?I think this is a good news story all around and it pays to speak up.?