

Canada Post could face Aurora backlash over community mail boxes

By Brock Weir

As the City of Hamilton and Canada Post prepare to go to court this month over the city's forceful measures for adequate public consultation on the placement of community mailboxes, urban municipalities are keeping an eye on the proceedings but Aurora might soon have a vested interest in the case.

If you're one of the estimated 4,000 Aurora residents still receiving home mail delivery, chances are you have resigned yourselves to the fact those days will soon be numbered in favour of community mailboxes. But, have you been asked where you'd like these community mailboxes to go?

That's what Councillor Tom Mrakas wants to know.

Next week, Council will review a Notice of Motion from the Councillor urging Aurora to endorse Hamilton's opposition to the elimination of home mail delivery and the installation of community mailboxes. If approved, this motion calls on Mayor Dawe to demand the Minister Responsible for Canada Post to immediately halt the installations and engage in full and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders, including the Town and its residents.

There are concerns residents have and lots of feedback that we haven't been involved in any consultation, says Councillor Mrakas. At first, what we heard at the table was Canada Post is working with the municipality to a certain point, but there isn't much we can do. Being a new Councillor, I took it for what it is, but then I heard what Hamilton is doing and I thought there is something we should do. This is something we should get behind and fight for our residents, our taxpayers, and look for that consultation to happen.

Everyone realises community mailboxes are going to happen, he says, and the motion is not about stopping what's coming. Rather, it is about getting Aurora to exert our authority over the land which we own.

To this end, Councillor Mrakas' motion goes further, requesting recommendations by the end of the month on aligning Aurora's bylaws with Hamilton's, regulating the installation of equipment on roads and appropriate property standards measures to require Canada Post to file for permits and a fee that reflects the resources required and costs incurred by the Town to install community mailboxes in established neighbourhoods.

We have municipal standards and regulations in regards to the planning when it comes to our rights of way, he says. We maintain them, we own them, costs incurred are ours and the taxpayers', therefore we should have a say when someone is looking to install something, whether it is Canada Post, Bell or any type of utility. That way we could have meaningful conversation with the residents and have them be able to put it in and say, 'You know what? This might be a better place for that mailbox.'

With all due respect to Canada Post, they just look at a map and say this is a good location, but who knows the Town and the Town roads better than the residents who live here and the people who work here? We are the ones who know which spots are better. To put a community mailbox in the Heritage District right on the front boulevard of one of our most historical houses is not right. It wouldn't fit in with the existing neighbourhood. The intent is to say to Canada Post you can't just come in and do what you want on our property. You need to follow the rules that are set out for everyone.

Community mailboxes in some of Aurora's newer communities were placed in locations as the communities developed and grew, and were subject to municipal planning processes and, thus, were also the subject of what he describes as meaningful conversation. Placing community mailboxes in existing neighbourhoods, on the other hand, is a separate matter altogether.

Hamilton has taken the lead and I commend them for doing what they have done, said Councillor Mrakas. I think the more municipalities and the more towns jump on board we have a stronger voice together and maybe we can finally say to the Federal government: 'Hey, what's going on here? This is our municipal right of way, we pay for them, maintain them, and we expect to have

that meaningful consultation process before these boxes are installed.' They say they do it, but they're not. To speak to just a few residents who are directly in front of [the potential location] is not meaningful consultation.?