

Town looks for ways to crack down on door-to-door sales

By Brock Weir

If you've opened your door to find someone on your stoop claiming to represent the Town of Aurora, there is a chance that simply wasn't the case and those actually representing the Town are now looking at ways to clamp down on potential fraudsters following last week's Council meeting.

The move came following a Notice of Motion from Councillor Tom Mrakas, who stated the "financial well-being and personal safety of Aurora residents is of the utmost importance," and seniors in particular need more protection from "unethical, misleading and/or aggressive door-to-door salespeople."

"While we all realise that not too long ago there was some misrepresentation at the door, someone going around misrepresenting themselves saying they were from the Town of Aurora, we don't know the whole story, but that is what we are hearing," said Councillor Mrakas. "It is our responsibility to look out for the personal safety of our residents."

"There are many municipalities across the country that have regulations when it speaks to door to door sales and print advertising materials, and I think it is best if we send it back to staff to have them create a bylaw, maybe using some of the language from other bylaws from other municipalities and bring back what would work for us in Aurora to be able to protect ourselves."

Indeed, Councillor Mrakas' motion called for a proposed bylaw to be brought directly before Council in the first quarter of the New Year, for some Councillors that was moving a bit too fast. The motion was amended that the bylaw coming forward be accompanied by a report back to Council outlining various options Councillors should weigh before moving forward.

"I agree with the spirit of this motion and I agree it is something we should take a look at it, and I am surprised, quite frankly, the Town doesn't have a specific policy on this, but there are some Council directives and policies that are already in place and I think if we did have a report that indicated what we have in place, perhaps where there are gaps, then we can perhaps, as a Council, better aim our efforts on what we would like the new bylaw to say," said Councillor Jeff Thom, calling for a further report.

Councillor Paul Pirri also supported a further report.

"At first blush, this was something I was in favour of moving forward on right on the spot because there are some good examples of these bylaws in place in other municipalities across Canada," he said. "But, keeping specifically to Aurora and the Municipal Act, I would like to see a full picture of the context in which this bylaw would exist."

According to Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Bylaw Services, there are currently some provisions in the Town's existing Licencing Bylaw dealing with door to door salespeople. Additional legislation, she noted, is also included in the Consumer Protection Act. It would be helpful, she said, for her department to report back on related bylaws and provisions currently on the books and make some recommendations for additions and amendments that would "oversee these types of activities as well as enforcement, because there will be an impact on enforcement."

"When this first came up a while back, I didn't really know how we would be able to enforce this, but I think it is important to still have a bylaw on the books that would be directed specifically to this," said Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Added Councillor Sandra Humfries: "I am looking forward to an updated bylaw. It looks like we have some information in our bylaws, but perhaps a little bit more information in terms of how it can protect our residents, particularly seniors, [is needed]. I would like to see something that would protect them a little bit more from these things."