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Councillor wants audit of workers' cellphone use

The City of Ottawa spent about \$1.5 million on air time for cellphones and BlackBerrys last year, which works out to about \$44 per month on each of the 2,856 active phones that city employees had, according to a staff report.

About 20 per cent of all full-time employees had phones, according to a report that will go before council's audit, budget and finance committee next week.

Cellphones are handed out if the employee is away from his or her primary work site for more than 20 per cent of the time and needs to be available for consultation through

cellphone "on an immediate and/or continuous basis," as long as a cellphone is deemed more efficient and effective than voice mail, a pager or a two-way radio, the report says.

BlackBerrys are given out to employees who are away from their primary work space more than half of the time and need "frequent, real-time, mobile access to their calendar, e-mail and contacts," according to the report.

Each bill is reviewed monthly to identify users who use more than \$5 in long distance, roaming or text messaging. About 200 phones get flagged in a typical month, accord-

ing to the report.

Last month, Orléans Councillor Bob Monette presented a motion to council calling for auditor general Alain Lalonde to conduct an audit of telecommunications because "it seems that there is a lack of control surrounding the allocation of cellphones, office handsets and the general communications."

Council decided to refer the motion to the audit committee, which will deal with the issue during its meeting on Tuesday.

— Neco Cockburn

