

New town council to debate discuss cannabis stores in the municipality



Written By JOSHUA SANTOS

The provincial governments want to hear from municipalities on whether or not they want a cannabis store in their community, now that recreational marijuana is legal.

At this time, the Ontario Cannabis Store's online website is the only place to purchase legal marijuana for recreational purposes. A licensed private retail store system for cannabis will launch on April 1, 2019, overseen by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, according to a news release.

The government said this model will foster healthy competition to better combat the illegal market and build a safe, reliable retail system where public safety is paramount, according to a news release.

?Municipalities will have a one-time window to opt-out of permitting cannabis retail stores within their municipal boundaries and they can enact by-laws that further restrict smoking cannabis beyond the provincial minimum standards in places like parks. First Nations communities will also be provided with a similar opportunity to prohibit cannabis retail and delivery within their communities, which will not be time limited,? said Vic Fedeli, Ontario finance minister.

?Cannabis stores operating in Ontario today are doing so illegally. The government has given police the tools to shut down illegal cannabis store operators. As of today, illegal operators face significant fines, and they will not be granted licenses to participate in the legal market.

In terms of consumption, the province has said cannabis consumption will be regulated under the existing Smoke Free Ontario Act that tobacco consumers currently abide by.

Cannabis users can smoke and vape cannabis in private residences, sidewalks, parks, designated guest rooms in hotels and motels, resident vehicles and boats that are parked or anchored and in scientific research and testing facilities.

The council of the past however, has amended its parks by-law to prohibit the consumption of recreational cannabis in Town parks. They're given the authority to do so as Fedeli stated above.

Shelburne council has also signed off on a new cannabis by law prohibiting the use of the drug in public places.

Their new by law will prohibit the smoking or vaping of recreational cannabis in or on any public spaces in Shelburne. This would include all Town owned spaces, such as streets, laneways, sidewalks and parking lots, but would also cover numerous other areas, due to the provincial definition of what is considered a public space.

This follows a list of other places where cannabis cannot be consumed such as indoor common areas in condos and apartment buildings, enclosed public places, non-designated guest rooms in hotels, near schools and hospitals, publicly owned places and vehicles and boats in operation.

Those caught driving impaired by cannabis can face an immediate license suspension, financial penalties, possible vehicle impound, may have a criminal record can face jail time.

Town of Caledon administration will present a report to council once they are settled into their new roles to deliberate which route to pursue on retail stores.

?To opt out, municipal councils must pass a resolution by January 22, 2019 stating they do not wish to host cannabis retail stores in

their communities,? said Tony Maxwell, Town of Caledon communications spokesperson in an email interview.
?Keeping in mind the January 22, 2019 deadline date, town staff will be presenting a report on this matter to the new Council at the earliest opportunity.?

An inaugural town hall meeting will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. Committee meetings will begin on Tuesday, Dec. 11.