

Caledon considers potential of allowing legal cannabis stores in Town

Feasibility study greenlit by Council

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

It's high time to review whether allowing legal cannabis stores in Caledon is beneficial, according to local lawmakers.

At Caledon Council's October 24 meeting, Caledon resident Wendel Clarke made a presentation to Council outlining reasons why he thinks Caledon should allow legal retail cannabis stores.

Clarke, a project management professional, was joined by his son Shane, who also lives in Caledon and owns Tottenham cannabis store Smokey Daze.

When the Cannabis Act came into effect in 2018, it allowed municipalities to choose whether or not they wanted to allow the sale of cannabis in their jurisdiction.

In a January 15, 2019 meeting, Caledon Council chose to opt out of allowing the sale of cannabis in Caledon.

Clarke said there are a number of reasons why Caledon should reconsider that decision.

He said there hasn't been an increase in crime in municipalities that opted in to allowing legal cannabis stores, quoting a report from Calgary police.

Clarke said allowing legal cannabis stores can bring significant economic benefits to a community, through an increase in tax revenue and the creation of jobs.

Clarke quoted a report from professional services firm Deloitte that said legal cannabis has contributed \$13.3 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product.

Clarke said it would be naive to think that no one uses cannabis in Caledon. Based on accepting the fact there are cannabis users in Town, he said their needs are being met in one of two ways: either they are leaving Caledon to spend their money purchasing legal cannabis elsewhere, or they're buying cannabis illegally in Caledon.

"We know that Caledon was not ready for cannabis when the initial decision was [made]," said Clarke. "However, I believe that residents are now better informed and will be more receptive to having a cannabis store in full compliance with regulations and local by-laws."

Clarke said Caledon OPP should be given all the tools to ensure laws and by-laws are adhered to if Caledon allows legal cannabis stores. He also said Council could implement its own rules to prevent "clustering" of cannabis stores, so that numerous stores do not open in the same area.

Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell thanked Clarke for his presentation. He said now that it's been five years since cannabis legalization, Caledon is a position where it might want to look at allowing legal retail cannabis stores going forward.

He put forward a motion asking Town of Caledon staff to "review the feasibility of permitting cannabis retail stores within the Town of Caledon and report back in the first quarter of 2024."

This motion was supported unanimously by his fellow Councillors.