

Caledon will continue to prohibit retail cannabis stores

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Those looking to purchase legal cannabis must continue to do so outside of Caledon.

At Caledon Council's April 9 General Committee meeting, Councillors nearly unanimously voted to continue to opt out of having legal cannabis retail stores in Town.

Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell was the lone voice of support for allowing the stores.

When cannabis was made legal by the Federal Government in 2018, it gave municipalities the option to opt in or out of allowing stores within their boundaries. In January of 2019, Caledon councillors chose to opt out.

Since then, a new term of Council has begun. In October 2023, a motion from Maskell asking Town staff to review the feasibility of permitting cannabis retail stores in Caledon was passed by Council. The motion directed Town of Caledon staff to report back to Council in the first quarter of 2024, which they did at the April 9 meeting.

The report from staff included data from a recent survey conducted by the Town on the topic.

In 2024, 56 per cent of survey respondents were against allowing cannabis stores, while 41 per cent were in support and two per cent were undecided. 323 people participated in the survey.

A similar survey conducted by the Town in 2019 found that 52 per cent of residents supported allowing cannabis stores, while 43 per cent were against them and three per cent were undecided. 602 people participated in that survey.

Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan said neighbouring municipalities that have opted in and allowed cannabis stores have seen negative ramifications from the decision. She said she doesn't like how once a municipality opts in to allowing the stores, they can't choose to opt out again.

"I'm not against cannabis? but I don't think we need shops in Caledon," said Kiernan.

Regional Councillor Mario Russo said he doesn't like how the Province would be in charge of everything surrounding the stores. Municipalities do not have jurisdiction, enforcement or licensing authority in the retail cannabis industry ? this is all under the control of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and the police.

"It takes away the autonomy of the municipality to decide certain bylaw restrictions that we're allowed with every other business out there," said Russo.

Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer said the residents he's been speaking to haven't said they want Caledon to opt in to allowing cannabis stores.

Maskell said he believes a cannabis store is a business just like any other and should be treated as such. He said the market for the stores would regulate itself.

"If they're selling a product that people want, then they'll stay in business. If they're not selling a product that people want then they'll go out of business," he said. "We're missing the boat because we're not actually looking at this in the way it needs to be

looked at, which is a purely business decision. I'm shocked that we're actually turning business away in this Town and turning away places that would rent a store.?

Maskell said Caledon residents are purchasing cannabis anyways in other municipalities.

?Why don't we bring it here and allow people in Caledon to purchase a legal product in their community?? he asked.

Council's decision to continue to not allow retail cannabis stores will come up for final approval at Council's April 30 meeting.