



REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Susan Silver, Senior Advisor, Strategic Initiatives

DATE: April 16, 2021

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2021-0008

RE: Cannabis Retail Policy Revision

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2021-0008 dated April 16, 2021 regarding Cannabis Retail Policy be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council adopt the revised Cannabis Retail Policy attached as Appendix A to this report.

BACKGROUND:

At the April 9, 2019 Planning, Public Works and Transportation (PPT) Committee meeting, recommendations from Report No. CORP-2019-0007, Corporate Policy "Cannabis Retail Policy" were approved by the Committee and officially adopted by Council at the April 15th, 2019 meeting. (Resolution No. 2019-0075)

This policy was put in place to ensure the town can comment to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario - AGCO within the 15-day notice and appeal period and provides a framework for staff to evaluate proposed locations.

When the policy was initially adopted, the Province had restrictions in place that limited the number of licenses that would be issued for retail store locations. Report ADMIN-2019-0009 dated February 15, 2019 noted that "if limits are revoked, resources will have to be reviewed and processes put in place to ensure applications to the AGCO can be responded to within the appropriate timeframes allotted."

COMMENTS:

Store Authorizations and Limits

In January of 2020, the province removed the temporary cap on the number of private cannabis stores in Ontario, moving to an open market model. In September 2020, the AGCO announced the government's direction to double the number of retail store authorizations issued per month, from 20 to 40. In December 2020, the government provided further direction to double the pace of store authorizations once again, from 40 to 80 per month. As of February 16, 2021, the AGCO again increased the pace of authorizations to reach an objective of issuing 30 authorizations per week.

Applications in the Town of Halton Hills

To date, several applications have been made to the AGCO for retail locations within Halton Hills. Appendix B of this report shows the status of applications as of April 16, 2021.

As noted in the policy (Appendix A), the Ontario government set out regulations pertaining to permitted locations for cannabis retail stores. The regulation provides that any objections be based on "public interest" as defined in the regulation as:

- Protecting public health and safety
- Protecting youth and restricting their access to cannabis
- Preventing illicit activities in relation to cannabis

With respect to public interest, the adopted policy includes the following guidance for staff when evaluating locations: *"retail cannabis stores are discouraged within 150 metres of nearby properties designed to serve youth including arenas/community centres, public libraries, child care centres, youth centres, group homes, treatment centres or other sensitive facilities that serve persons with mental health or addiction challenges."* This guidance is not included in the Ontario regulation, but rather was provided to staff by Council under Cannabis Retail Policy, CORP-2019-0007.

Based on this guidance, town staff have filed objections to *two locations*, as noted in Appendix B. The Registrar (AGCO) considers submissions and decides whether an application will proceed.

With respect to the location at 38 Mill Street in Acton, the AGCO has ruled that this location is not contrary to public interest in accordance with the provincial regulation and has issued a formal response which is included as Appendix C to this report. The response did not include a final decision on whether or not the location would receive authorization to open and only addressed the matter of the objection; however, as of the writing of this report, this location has since been authorized by the AGCO to open.

The second location for which the town filed a complaint, 28 Main Street Georgetown, has also been authorized by the AGCO to open. In the acknowledgement of the

complaint, the AGCO reiterated regulated distance buffers but did not provide any other information pertaining to their decision.

At this time, no other objections to applications have been submitted by the Town. Council will note that there are currently a number of “in progress” applications on the AGCO website (Appendix B) which have not yet started a public notice period and these will be formally evaluated when that timeframe stipulates.

Policy Updates

In light of the changes to limits on store authorizations, the Cannabis Retail Policy was reviewed. The updated draft policy attached as Appendix A to this report has been revised to reflect changes to *Section 3. Process and Responsibilities*. Specifically, the revision addresses the implementation of a formal, mechanized process with responsibilities for monitoring, assessing and communicating defined.

Despite feedback received to date from the AGCO concerning public interest, there are no revisions recommended to the town’s interpretation of public interest and staff will continue to assess locations based on the guidance described.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report is in keeping with the Town’s Strategic priority, Fiscal and Corporate Management and aligns with the value to provide responsive, effective municipal government.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no financial implications related to this report.

CONSULTATION:

The following departments were consulted regarding the changes to the policy: Planning, Recreation and Parks, Building Services/Zoning, Clerks and Legislative Services.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

This policy revision is administrative in nature and does not require public engagement.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation outlined in this report is not applicable to the Strategy’s implementation.

COMMUNICATIONS:

This policy will be provided to all Council Members and posted on the Town’s Cannabis Information webpage.

CONCLUSION:

In keeping with the commitment to conduct periodic policy reviews and in light of the provincial changes to the licensing of retail cannabis stores, a more formal process to monitor, assess and communicate is being recommended.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cockfield', written in a cursive style.

Richard Cockfield, Director of Strategic Planning

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Mills', written in a cursive style.

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer