

REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Susan Silver, Senior Advisor, Strategic Planning & Continuous Improvement

DATE: January 15, 2019

REPORT NO.: Rpt-ADMIN-2019-0002

RE: Retail Cannabis Survey Results

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT report No. ADMIN-2019-0002 dated January 15, 2019 regarding results of public engagement on retail cannabis stores be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Halton Hills Town Council recommends;

a) opting OUT of permitting cannabis retail stores to be located in the Town of Halton Hills

OR

b) opting IN to allow cannabis retail stores to be located in the Town of Halton Hills;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town Clerk be directed to submit notice of resolution regarding the decision to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario at municipal@agco.ca by 11:59 PM EST, January 22, 2019.

BACKGROUND:

At the December 17, 2018 meeting, Council directed, *“THAT staff commence community consultation regarding whether to allow Cannabis Retail stores within Halton Hills, and report back to Council on January 21, 2019 with the results of the public consultation in order for Council to make an informed decision to either Opt In or Opt Out of allowing Cannabis Retail stores within Halton Hills.”*

Memorandum MEM-ADMIN-2019-0001 details the steps taken to respond to the staff direction. The purpose of this report is to present the results of the survey.

COMMENTS:

- Survey results presented represent both online and in-person responses with distinctions noted.
- Demographic information was also collected and is duly noted in the results and analysis section of this report.
- All comments received along with any additional correspondence are included in appendices. Almost 600 comments were registered via the survey, which translates to over 70% of respondents.
- Respondents to the online survey were required to provide postal code information when registering. This information indicates that nearly 99% of respondents were from Halton Hills. A total of 5 responses were from Milton and 1 from Oakville.

Participation

A total of 783 individuals participated across the surveys as noted in the table below broken down by online vs. in-person.

Survey Method	# of respondents
Online letstalk survey	493
In-person ballots	290
Total	783

Age Group: In term of the cross-section of participants, comparing the age structure of survey respondents to the age structure of the Halton Hills population, it is significant that the survey respondent age structure very closely mirrored that of the adult population as a whole, demonstrating that the survey results are representative of the demographic profile of Halton Hills.

Age Group*	% of Halton Hills Population (20 Years of Age and Older)	% of Survey Respondents
20-39	29.8	30.9
40-54	34.9	34.6
55+	35.3	34.5

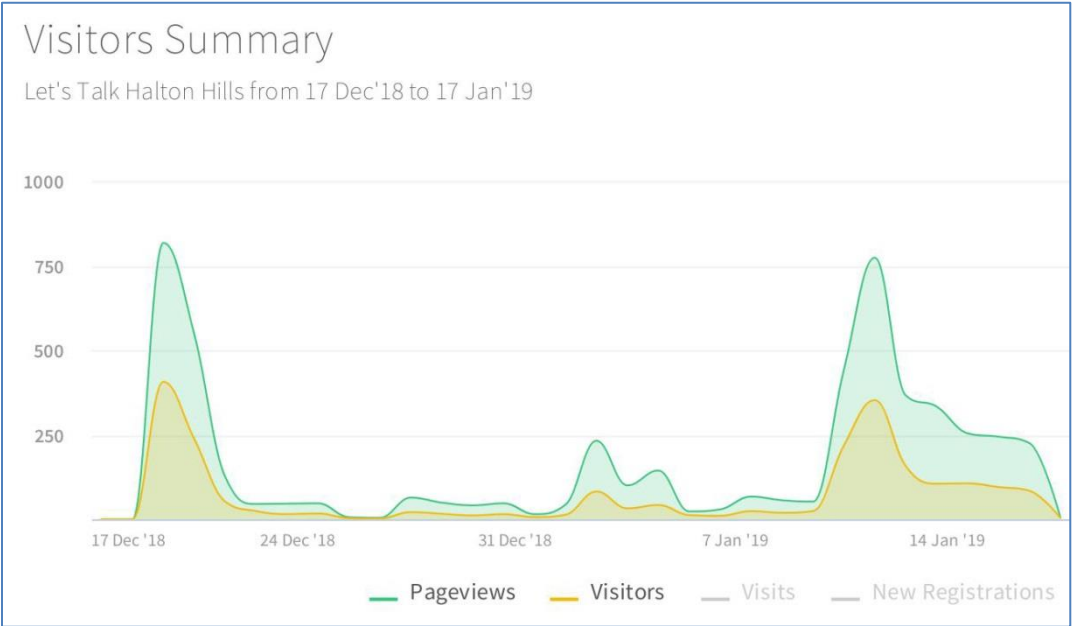
*The 2016 Census population of Halton Hills was 61,160. This includes 16,035 youth (people aged 0-19), representing 26 percent of the total population. The survey with respect to retail stores for cannabis was targeted to people 19 years of age and older. The 2016 Census population of Halton Hills excluding youth (i.e. adult population 20 years old and older) was 45,110.

Rural/Urban: The 2016 Census population of Halton was almost 85% urban (i.e. located within the urban areas of Acton and Georgetown) and 15% rural (i.e. located in the rural area, including the hamlets of Glen Williams and Norval and rural clusters). As shown in the table below, the residence of survey respondents matches the urban/rural structure of the 2016 Census population, demonstrating the effectiveness of the combined on-line and in-person surveys in reaching both urban and rural residents of the Town.

Rural/Urban Population	% of Halton Hills Population	% of Survey Respondents
Urban	84.4	79.7
Rural	15.6	20.3

Engagement

The online survey was open to the public from December 19, 2018 to January 16, 2019. The following chart demonstrates high level of engagement from the launch of the survey until December 23 followed by an expected dip due to the holiday. Additional promotion in January achieved an equally high spike as was seen in December.



There was greater than 750 views at initial launch, over 200 views during the first week of January and another significant spike after additional promotion began January 10.

Online participation presented in terms of the Town’s Public Engagement Matrix is as follows:

Public Engagement Matrix			
Spectrum of Engagement	Inform <i>- communicate; share information to build awareness</i>	Consult <i>- listen and learn; test ideas and concepts and develop recommendations</i>	Collaborate
Statistics	Viewed survey: 2100	Took survey: 493	Not applicable

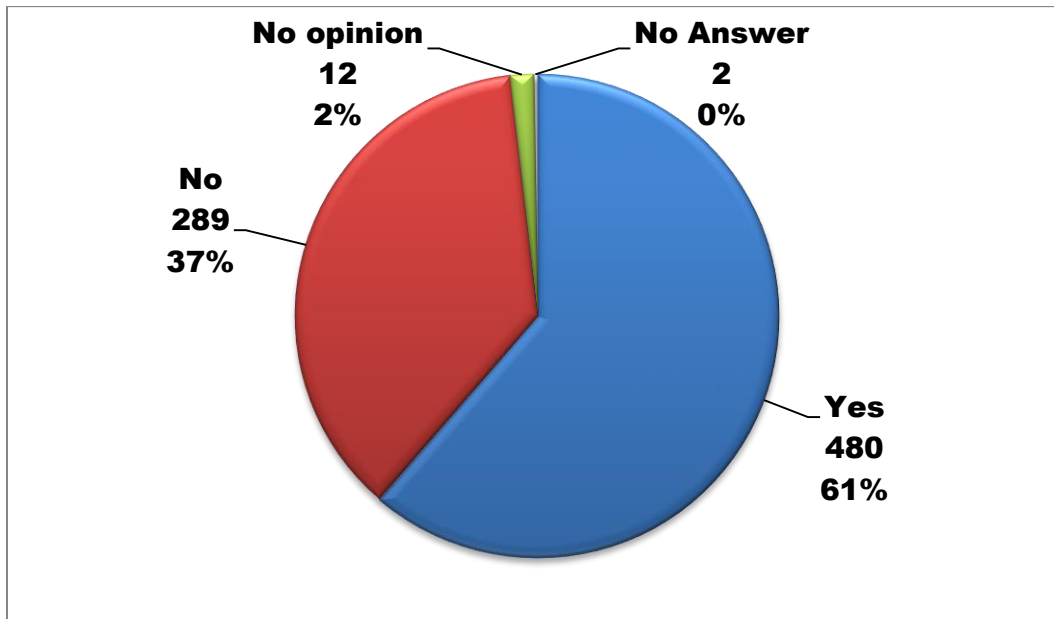
It should be noted that the Town only allowed registered participants to take the survey to avoid multiple submissions. In reviewing the results in the context of industry experience, the operators of EngagementHQ, (the ‘letstalk’ tool used by the Town), cite the average conversion of survey viewers to survey participants to be 10%. The Town’s survey saw a conversion of approximately 23%. This number is particularly significant given that participant registration was required.

Results and Analysis

Question 1: Do you think the Town of Halton Hills should allow retail cannabis stores?

Overall results	Online	In-Person	Total
Yes	324	156	480
No	159	130	289
No Opinion or No Answer	10	4	14
Total	493	290	783

Overall Results



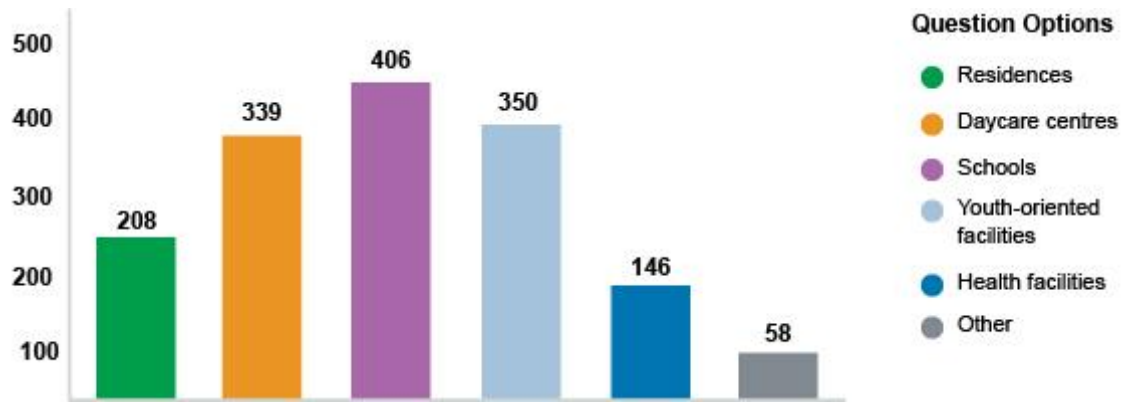
That data is further presented to show responses using demographic information collected across both online and in-person surveys:

Age Group	18 or younger	19-39	40-54	55+	Did not provide
Yes	2	185	159	134	-
No	6	51	105	126	1
No Opinion or No Answer	-	3	4	7	-

Urban/ Rural	Urban	Rural	Did not provide
Yes	375	104	1
No	236	51	2
No Opinion or No Answer	11	3	-

Question 2: (online only) If the Town chooses to allow retail stores, the municipality (as well as the public) has the opportunity to provide comments within 15 calendar days on any store applications that the Province is considering for Halton Hills. The Town would like to suggest that retail stores not be located near certain uses. Please check off the uses that you feel retail stores should not be near. Keep cannabis stores away from (check all that apply):

Use	# of responses
Residences	208
Daycare centres	339
Schools	406
Youth-oriented facilities	350
Health facilities	146
Other	58



“Other” uses are noted in Appendix A and many consist of comments, rather than use

In December, AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) provided a draft policy statement template to help municipal governments that may wish to allow recreational cannabis retail sales in their communities to identify sensitive areas and better guide retail store location. The template is based up the ‘public interest’ definition in the regulations. Should the town choose to opt-in, a policy can help staff to provide comment to the AGCO on proposed location within the 15-day statutory consultation window. Information provided by respondents to this question would serve as input in the formation of a policy statement.

Question 3: Please share any other comments about retail cannabis stores

In addition to comments related to a Yes/No response, participants were invited to offer additional comments on why the Town should allow or not allow retail cannabis stores. All comments in original format are included in appendices.

The dominant themes across all comments included:

Economic Benefits

- By opting-out, Halton Hills will lose all future revenue sharing from the government that committed to splitting 50% of tax revenues after \$100 million in tax revenue.
- Getting a store will drive local foot traffic which could benefit other businesses and bring financial stability to the Town.
- Eliminate the black market.
- Create new job opportunities especially in the tourism section.
- If Halton Hills doesn't open stores, people will spend the money in a town that does. We'd rather buy local and support the local economy.
- The potential economic benefit is more than offset by negative societal impacts (e.g. crime, addiction, impairment, etc.)

Cannabis vs. Alcohol and Tobacco Stores

- Cannabis is a legal substance and much less harmful than other legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco.
- There is no difference between allowing LCBO, beer and wine stores and cannabis stores.
- With online sales, no need for physical stores.
- Access to cannabis is not needed in a small town.
- People of age will purchase for minors.

Health

- Cannabis could play a critical role in harm reduction and compete with alcohol in the recreational intoxicant market.
- Cannabis is far safer from a public health perspective than alcohol.
- Cannabis and cannabis-related products have so many health benefits and could change lives for the better.
- Having a safe and regulated outlet for cannabis is better than acquiring it on the streets with unknown product quality.
- Many Halton residents use cannabis for personal health reasons and it should be more easily accessible.
- Health effects and smell of second hand smoke should not be endured by children, non-smokers, pets and wildlife.
- Opening stores will be tempting for the many people trying to recover from addiction in Halton Hills.

Safety

- There is no threat to public safety.
- Teens will have better education and advice from people who know about THC, CBD, edible produces, etc.
- It's better for the community to be well informed and not behind the times.
- Children will not be impacted by a store existing near where their school or daycare maybe because children are not legally able to enter the store.
- It's a safer option than Opioids and other prescription, addicting drugs.
- Will help get rid of the hundreds of illegal dealers in Halton Hills.
- Local access should help eliminate the existing criminal underground for these products.
- There should be strict security measures in place. Full time and fully trained security personnel will be needed.
- Children/youth do not need such easy access.
- Most people who move to Halton Hills want a safe, family-friendly place to raise their kids. Cannabis stores will jeopardize the safety of all citizens.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The report relates to the Town's Strategic Plan Priority under Communications to continue to provide timely, transparent communications to the community.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Financial impact will be based on the decision made by Council. In January, the Town received an initial payment of \$27,747 from the Ontario Cannabis Legalization Fund (OCLIF). A decision to opt-out would result in a second payment of \$5,000 only. Total amounts linked to a decision to opt-in are as yet unknown. No information regarding funding beyond the OCLIF has been shared to date with municipalities.

CONSULTATION:

Multiple departments were consulted to gather and confirm information contained in this report, including Communications, Planning, Clerks, and Strategic Planning.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Consultation was launched in accordance with the Town's approved Public Engagement Charter. All data collected is available as appendices to this report (~ 125 pages).

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The recommendation outlined in this report is not directly applicable to the Strategy's implementation.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A Cannabis information page was launched in August 2018. This page is continuously updated. Additionally, throughout the course of this particular engagement, multiple channels were utilized to inform and consult.

CONCLUSION:

Multiple channels were utilized to implement and promote the consultation. Results demonstrate strong participation, are reflective of the demographic of the Town and meet the principles of the Public Engagement Charter.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Cockfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "R" being particularly large and stylized.

Richard Cockfield, Manager Strategic Planning & Continuous Improvement

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter "B" being large and prominent.

Brent Marshall, CAO