

News Advertiser

December 5, 2018

[Pickering to consult community on private cannabis sales](#)

by Judi Bobbitt

PICKERING — The City of Pickering will turn to the community for consultation on the question of allowing private storefront sales of cannabis when the Ontario government launches a new retail model in April.

“We are putting it back to the community,” Mayor Dave Ryan said during the inaugural meeting of council Monday, when politicians were sworn to another term of office. The issue will be part of the Dec. 10 council meeting agenda, he said.

Ontario has given municipalities until Jan. 22 to choose to opt out of allowing private storefront sales of cannabis. A staff report coming to council Monday recommends against opting in, says Ward 1 city Coun. Maurice Brenner.

“The direction is going to be to have a frank discussion,” says Brenner, adding a community consultation plan will seek input through meetings, surveys and outreach.

Once a municipality opts in to allowing private cannabis sales, it can’t opt out, says Brenner. But opting out in January means Pickering could always opt in later, he said.

“Unless we have all concerns addressed and input from the community, it makes no sense to opt in and then go back and try to fix it.”

He said the issue was not a contentious one at the door during the October municipal election, but there’s a cross section of opinions and “it’s on the minds of residents.”

The provincial legislation is vague in specifying what types of businesses will be allowed to sell cannabis for recreational, medical or therapeutic purposes, added Brenner. “If you’re a health food store, with therapeutic oils, can you sell it?”

He said it wouldn’t be ideal to have Pickering residents driving to other municipalities to purchase recreational cannabis.

“A lot of the community does want the ability to purchase,” he said. “We need an education component.”

Currently, the Ontario Cannabis Store website offers the only option to legally purchase cannabis in the province. When the provincial government launches its private retail model in April, store licenses will be granted by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, with the Ontario Cannabis Store the exclusive wholesaler to the stores.