

Aurora could soon get first pot shop

By Brock Weir

Aurora could soon get its first retail cannabis store.

More than six months after Council's 6 ? 1 decision to opt in on retail cannabis sales, the first Aurora application was drawn in a lottery held last week by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

The local applicant drawn in the August 20 lottery is Grant Wilson, with the listed address of 15243 Yonge Street, Unit 3.

Wilson's application was among 4,864 vying for a place on the winner's list, and was ultimately one of a successful 42. He will now have until Wednesday, August 28, to formally apply for a cannabis retail operator license.

The results of last week's draw caught the attention of municipal staff who, according to Mayor Tom Mrakas, are considering the possibility of a retail cannabis store on the southeast quadrant of Yonge and Wellington, from the perspective of traffic, parking, and other factors.

?I think it is premature to say whether it would be a good location or not,? says Mayor Mrakas, who voted in favour of opting in. ?I think as we get closer and we see if it is actually going to become the application, then maybe we can have a more in-depth conversation about what will be happening?with a store in the Downtown Core.

?At the end of the day, I don't see too many issues. It is a centrally located area, it is not around a main residential corridor, so a lot of the issues I think some people brought up in the conversation on whether we should opt-in or opt-out, I don't see those concerns with this specific location.?

During the conversation on whether Aurora was going to opt-in or opt-out, with Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville ultimately being the only two York Region municipalities to give the thumbs-up to the plan, Council members and some residents suggested the Town's industrial areas, whether on Industrial Parkway or in the Leslie Street business parks, would be a conducive location for a retail pot shop.

Asked whether or not he saw a potential cannabis store in the heart of the historic Downtown core in the middle of multimillion-dollar projects ongoing towards Downtown Revitalization, Mayor Mrakas said he didn't see it having an impact one way or another.

?The revitalization of our Downtown Core is going to be through Library Square, more restaurants, and more unique businesses coming in,? he said. ?I don't think one store is going to change that aspect of it, whether in a positive or negative way. Would it be ideal if it was in an

industrial area? Yeah, it would be ideal, but then you would have other residents that would feel it is a difficult location to go to. There are plusses and minuses to every location, and that is why I think it is imperative that we sit down (as Council) with Town Staff and let's have those conversations, see what our thoughts are and if we want to put in any comments.

?If we have any issues with the location being proposed, we can follow the process, put that through, talk to the residents in the meantime as well, and see if the residents in the area have any issues, [along with whether] the residents of the Town overall have any issues with the proposed location. We can submit comments to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario when the time comes.?

As it stands now, Mayor Mrakas is recommending a ?wait and see approach? to see the details of the application once it comes in. When those details are available local lawmakers will look at that, consider the comments received, and render some of their own.

?Once we do that, we will have a better understanding of what's happening and whether that location will be approved or not.?