

Aurora opts in on retail cannabis after raucous Council meeting

By Brock Weir

Aurora has voted 5 ? 1 to opt in on retail cannabis.

The decision came at the end of a raucous Council meeting that descended into chaos in the public gallery when it was clear how the vote was going to go.

The motion to opt in was made by Councillor Sandra Humfries, and was followed by impassioned speeches by all Council members participating in the debate.

Voting in favour of opting in were Mayor Tom Mrakas, Councillors Wendy Gaertner, Rachel Gilliland and John Gallo. The lone voice stating the case for opting out was Councillor Harold Kim.

Councillor Michael Thompson excused himself from the debate citing a conflict of interest due to his job with a retail pharmacy. Although Councillor Gallo's decision to opt in tipped the scales towards a victory for the opt-in count, the meeting turned raucous as soon as the phrase 'opt in' escaped Councillor Gaertner's lips.

At the moment she made her decision clear, a chorus of shouting came out from the public galleries, which were filled with nearly 200 area residents. Sparks flew when the outnumbered opt-in crowd joined in the fray, spurring heated arguments and gestures, at which point Council members left the chambers until the verbal brawl died down.

27 members of the public stated their cases at the podium. Just six of these residents spoke in favour of opting in.