

■ CANNABIS AND YOU

HALTON HILLS TO COMMENCE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PRIVATIZED POT SALES IN JANUARY

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Town staff is prepared to bring forward a resolution to opt out of private cannabis stores ahead of the Jan. 22 deadline imposed by the Ontario government, giving the Town of Halton Hills additional time for public consultation, senior planning adviser Susan Silver told council last Monday evening.

In late September, the province announced that the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario will be responsible for licensing and regulating private cannabis stores across the province.

The legislation also gives municipalities the option to opt out of cannabis retail stores before Jan. 22.

Should the Halton Hills choose to opt out by the deadline, it will continue to have the option to opt back in at a later date, Silver said.

However, municipalities that initially decide to stay opted in are not privy to the same

flexibility.

"Opting in is a one-way street," Silver told council, adding that those municipalities that do opt in, however, will receive a minimum of \$10,000 - funds that may not be available should municipalities choose to do so after the deadline passes.

"The decision to opt out could impact future funding, which could mean forgoing any share of the province's revenue should they exceed \$100 million over the first few years," Silver said.

On Nov. 14, Ontario put forth regulations for the licensing and operation of private cannabis stores, which outlines that each store must be located at a minimum distance of 150 metres from schools, and specifies that stores will be required to deny entry to anyone under 19 years of age.

The regulations also outline that those eligible to obtain Ontario cannabis sales licenses must not be associated with organized crime, must be in good standing with the government with regards to their taxes, and must not already be operating their business illegally.

Municipalities that choose to remain opted in before the deadline will be given a 15-day window for community consultation, ahead of the licensing process. Stores that become licensed will officially open on April 1.

"Given the timelines outlined for public engagement if accepted, it is clear Jan. 22 would be a very tight timeline," Silver added.

She said town staff will have a report prepared for council in December, regarding the impacts of the regulations.

A public consultation process is slated to begin in January and continue on until March.

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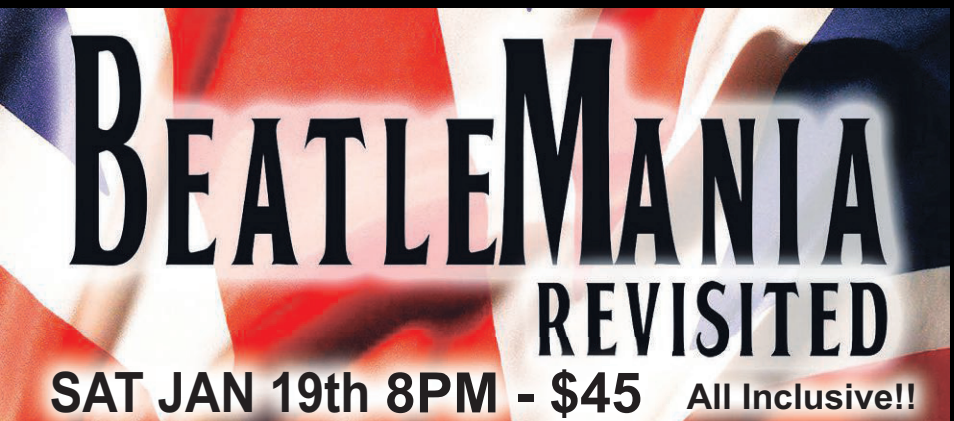
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