



Legislative Services
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Town of Aurora
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September 30, 2026

Executive Director
York Regional Police Services Board

Delivered by email
psb@yrp.ca

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario

premier@ontario.ca

The Honourable Rob Flack
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

minister.mah@ontario.ca

Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO)

municipal@agco.ca

**Re: Town of Aurora Council Resolution of September 22, 2026
Report No. CS26-022 - Cannabis Retail Review Task Force - Findings and
Recommendations**

Please be advised that this matter was considered by Council at its meeting held on September 22, 2026, and in this regard, Council adopted the following resolution:

1. That **Report No. CS26-022** be received; and
2. That the Local Actions set out in the Recommendations section of the final report of the Cannabis Retail Review Task Force be implemented; and
3. That the final report of the Cannabis Retail Review Task Force be circulated to York Regional Police, the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO), Local Members of Provincial Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and all municipalities in Ontario for consideration and support.

The above is for your consideration and any attention deemed necessary.

Sincerely,

Anne Kantharajah

Anne Kantharajah
Town Clerk
The Corporation of the Town of Aurora

AK/lb

Attachments (Council meeting extract and final report of the Cannabis Retail Review Task Force)

Copy: Dawn Gallagher Murphy, MPP Newmarket—Aurora
(dawn.gallaghermurphy@pc.ola.org)
Hon. Michael Parsa, MPP Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill
(michael.parsaco@pc.ola.org)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) (resolutions@amo.on.ca)
All Ontario Municipalities



8. Committee of the Whole Meeting Report of September 8, 2026

Moved by Councillor Thompson

Seconded by Councillor Gallo

That the Committee of the Whole Meeting Report of September 8, 2026, be received and the recommendations carried by the Committee approved, with the exception of sub-items 8.4.1, 8.4.2, and 8.9.1, which were discussed and voted on separately as recorded below.

Yeas (7): Mayor Mrakas, Councillor Weese, Councillor Gilliland, Councillor Gaertner, Councillor Thompson, Councillor Gallo, and Councillor Kim

Carried (7 to 0)

8.4 Corporate Services Committee Agenda

8.4.4 CS26-022 - Cannabis Retail Review Task Force - Findings and Recommendations

1. That Report No. CS26-022 be received; and
2. That the Local Actions set out in the Recommendations section of the final report of the Cannabis Retail Review Task Force be implemented; and
3. That the final report of the Cannabis Retail Review Task Force be circulated to York Regional Police, the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO), Local Members of Provincial Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and all municipalities in Ontario for consideration and support.

Carried

Cannabis Retail Review Task Force

Final Findings and Recommendations

August 27, 2026

1. Purpose

The Cannabis Retail Review Task Force was established by Council to review the Town of Aurora's experience since opting in to Ontario's retail cannabis framework and to report back to Council with findings and recommendations.

The Task Force reviewed the provincial regulatory framework, previous Council decisions and reports, information from Town staff and York Regional Police, enforcement and complaint information, community concerns, the experience of neighbouring residents and businesses, and feedback received through the 2026 Cannabis Retail Review Survey.

The Task Force recognizes that legal cannabis retailers are legitimate businesses operating within a provincially regulated framework. The purpose of this review is not to reconsider the legalization of cannabis or Aurora's decision to opt in, but to determine what has been learned from Aurora's experience and identify opportunities to better address community impacts.

2. Background

Aurora Council opted in to permit private cannabis retail stores on January 21, 2019.

At the same time, Council recognized potential concerns regarding the location and concentration of cannabis retail stores and requested that the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario consider additional location restrictions.

Specifically, Council requested:

- A minimum 150-metre separation between cannabis retail stores; and
- A minimum 150-metre separation between cannabis retail stores and specified sensitive uses, including daycares, nurseries, parks, group homes, addiction and

counselling facilities, recreation facilities, the Aurora Public Library, Town Hall and similar public gathering uses.

Despite Council's request, these additional criteria were not adopted by the AGCO.

The Province currently requires a 150-metre separation from schools and private schools. Municipalities do not have authority to license private cannabis retailers or regulate cannabis retail as a separate land use. Cannabis stores are otherwise subject to the same applicable municipal zoning requirements as other permitted retail uses.

The Town's 2023 Retail Cannabis Update subsequently confirmed that the number or proximity of cannabis stores is not an objectionable criterion under the provincial framework and that municipalities have no control over their locations beyond the zoning requirements applicable to retail uses generally.

3. Community Survey

Council authorized a Cannabis Retail Review Survey to provide the Task Force with current community feedback.

The survey was conducted from July 14 to August 9, 2026 and was promoted through Town communication channels.

The survey received:

- 479 visits; and
- 154 completed responses.

The survey should be considered an important source of community feedback rather than a statistically representative referendum of all Aurora residents.

Overall, the survey indicates that the principal concern among respondents is not simply the existence of legal cannabis retail stores. Concerns are more strongly associated with:

- The number of cannabis retail stores;
- Concentration and clustering;
- Store locations;
- Proximity to sensitive uses;

- Youth exposure; and
- Neighbourhood impacts.

The Task Force also recognizes that a segment of respondents supports cannabis retail and considers these businesses legitimate and appropriately regulated retail operations.

These results generally reinforce the location and concentration concerns identified by Aurora Council when it opted in to cannabis retail in 2019.

4. Task Force Findings

Finding 1: Cannabis retail has not created a significant town-wide enforcement problem

The available information does not demonstrate widespread public safety, crime or municipal enforcement problems associated with cannabis retail stores across Aurora.

Town staff have historically reported relatively few complaints associated with legal cannabis retailers, and proactive By-law inspections conducted in March 2026 did not identify violations.

The Task Force therefore does not find evidence supporting a conclusion that cannabis retail stores, as a class of business, represent a significant town-wide enforcement problem.

Finding 2: Town-wide statistics do not necessarily reflect localized impacts

While aggregate complaint and enforcement numbers are relatively low, the Task Force heard concerns regarding impacts experienced by residents and businesses neighbouring certain cannabis retail locations.

Issues identified during the Task Force's work included:

- Litter and discarded cannabis packaging;

- Parking;
- Signage;
- Patron behaviour;
- Loitering or prolonged gathering;
- Neighbourhood compatibility; and
- Other nuisance and quality-of-life concerns.

The Task Force finds that a relatively small number of locations can generate significant impacts for immediate neighbours without producing large town-wide complaint statistics.

Accordingly, aggregate complaint data should not be the sole measure used to determine whether a localized problem exists.

Finding 3: Location and concentration are central concerns

The Task Force finds that one of the most consistent concerns is the location and concentration of cannabis retail stores rather than the existence of legal cannabis retail itself.

This finding is reinforced by the 2026 community survey, which identified the perceived number, concentration and location of stores as primary concerns.

The existing provincial framework provides Aurora with little ability to address these concerns.

Finding 4: Aurora anticipated these concerns in 2019

The Task Force finds it significant that Aurora Council identified location and concentration as potential concerns before cannabis retail stores began operating in the Town.

Council's 2019 request for:

- 150-metre separation between cannabis retail stores; and
- 150-metre separation from specified sensitive uses

was intended to provide reasonable safeguards while allowing legal cannabis retail businesses to operate in Aurora.

Seven years of experience and the results of the 2026 review demonstrate that many of the concerns identified by Council in 2019 remain relevant.

Finding 5: The provincial framework significantly limits municipal control

The Task Force finds that there is a significant gap between municipal responsibility for responding to community concerns and municipal authority to prevent or address the underlying location issues.

Aurora can enforce generally applicable municipal bylaws, including parking, signage and property-related regulations.

However, Aurora cannot:

- License cannabis retail stores;
- Regulate cannabis retail as a separate land use;
- Establish cannabis-specific zoning;
- Establish mandatory separation distances between cannabis stores; or
- Establish additional cannabis-specific setbacks from sensitive uses.

The ultimate authority respecting retail cannabis authorizations rests with the Province through the AGCO.

Finding 6: Localized problems require targeted responses

Given the relatively low level of town-wide complaints but more significant concerns associated with particular locations, the Task Force finds that targeted intervention is preferable to blanket enforcement.

Where persistent problems are identified, the Town should coordinate available resources and work with retailers, property owners, neighbouring businesses, residents, By-law Services, YRP and the AGCO, as appropriate, to address the specific circumstances.

Finding 7: Residents need clearer information about where and how to report concerns

Responsibility for cannabis-related concerns is divided among several organizations.

Depending upon the issue, residents may need to contact:

- Town of Aurora By-law Services;
- York Regional Police;
- The AGCO;
- York Region; or
- A property owner or business operator.

The Task Force finds that clearer public information would improve reporting, allow concerns to be directed to the appropriate authority and improve the quality of information available for future monitoring.

5. Recommendations

The Cannabis Retail Review Task Force recommends that Council endorse the following actions.

A. Local Actions

1. Improve public information and reporting

That the Town develop clear public information identifying where residents and businesses should report cannabis retail concerns, including the respective responsibilities of the Town, AGCO, York Regional Police and other appropriate agencies.

2. Establish a targeted response approach

That where recurring concerns are identified around a cannabis retail location, appropriate Town departments coordinate a targeted response using existing municipal

enforcement authorities and engage the retailer, property owner, neighbouring residents and businesses, YRP and AGCO where appropriate.

3. Encourage retailer and property-owner engagement

That the Town encourage cannabis retailers and property owners to proactively address legitimate neighbourhood concerns, including litter, parking, property maintenance and patron behaviour occurring on their properties.

4. Continue monitoring

That the Town periodically monitor cannabis retail-related complaints and enforcement activity to identify emerging trends or recurring locations of concern and report significant developments to Council as appropriate.

B. Provincial Advocacy

5. Reaffirm Aurora's 2019 position

That Council reaffirm its January 21, 2019 position respecting cannabis retail store locations and advocate to the Province of Ontario and the AGCO for implementation of those principles.

Specifically, Aurora should continue to advocate for authority to establish:

- A minimum 150-metre separation between cannabis retail stores; and
- A minimum 150-metre separation between cannabis retail stores and appropriate sensitive uses, including daycares, nurseries, parks, group homes, addiction and counselling facilities, recreation facilities, libraries and other appropriate public gathering places.

6. Provide municipalities greater authority over location and clustering

That Council request that the Province amend the cannabis retail regulatory framework to provide municipalities with meaningful authority to address the location, density and clustering of cannabis retail stores within their communities.

Any expanded municipal authority should allow municipalities to develop locally appropriate standards while maintaining reasonable opportunities for legal cannabis retailers to operate.

7. Strengthen municipal input into AGCO decisions

That Council request that the Province strengthen the municipal role in the AGCO retail store authorization process, including requiring meaningful consideration of municipal concerns regarding location, concentration, sensitive uses and documented community impacts.

8. Review operating conditions where neighbourhood impacts exist

That the Province and AGCO be requested to examine whether additional regulatory tools are appropriate where a cannabis retail operation generates repeated, documented impacts on neighbouring residential or commercial properties, including whether operating conditions or hours may be considered where warranted.

9. Coordinate advocacy with other Ontario municipalities

That Aurora's final Task Force report and Council resolution be forwarded to:

- The Premier of Ontario;
- The appropriate Provincial Ministers;
- The AGCO;
- The Association of Municipalities of Ontario;
- York Region;
- All Ontario municipalities,

with a request for support for greater municipal authority over cannabis retail location and clustering.

6. Conclusion

Aurora's experience with legal cannabis retail is nuanced.

The Task Force did not find evidence that cannabis retailers generally represent a significant town-wide public safety or enforcement problem. Legal cannabis retailers

are regulated businesses that contribute to Aurora's economy and should be treated fairly.

At the same time, the review demonstrates that legitimate localized impacts can occur and that the current provincial framework leaves municipalities with limited tools to address one of the community's principal concerns: where cannabis stores locate and how closely they may be concentrated.

Importantly, Aurora anticipated these issues in 2019.

When Council opted in to cannabis retail, it supported reasonable separation distances between stores and from sensitive uses. Those recommendations were not incorporated into the provincial framework. The concerns identified through the Task Force's work and the 2026 community survey demonstrate that those principles remain relevant today.

The Task Force therefore recommends a balanced approach.

Locally, Aurora should improve reporting, monitoring, communication and targeted responses where problems occur.

Provincially, Aurora should renew and strengthen its advocacy for the principles Council established in 2019 and request meaningful municipal authority over cannabis retail location, concentration and neighbourhood compatibility.

This approach recognizes cannabis retailers as legitimate businesses while also recognizing the responsibility of municipal government to protect the quality of life of residents and neighbouring businesses.

Councillor John Gallo
Town of Aurora
Cannabis Retail Review Task Force Chair