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King efforts working, but feds need to step up

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King's efforts to curtail illegal grow-ops are working, but more needs to be done at the federal level.King, last November, updated its bylaw surrounding cannabis production facilties.Led by Marsh farmer and Councillor Avia Eek, the bylaw helps Township staff curb illegal activities.In 2015, licenced producers were allowed to produce and sell cannabis oil, fresh marijuana buds and leaves. The Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulation (ACMPR) replaced the MMPR in 2016. This sets out provisions for individual who have registered with Health Canada to produce a limited amount of cannabis for their own purposes or to designate someone to produce it for them.Eek noted the Township was successful in shutting down a new operation.?However, unless Health Canada starts providing effective oversight, and starts asking for Letters of Permission from municipalities, those who will manipulate the system will continue to do so,? she said. ?What I mean by this is, if you want to obtain a licence from OMVIC to sell certain types of motorized vehicles, part of their licencing process requires the applicant to provide a letter from the municipality where they want to set up stating that is a permitted use. I see no reason why Health Canada cannot implement similar criteria.?Eek admitted the municipality has to have its ?planning house in order,??where cannabis is permitted, or not.But with upper level controls, at least then, the municipality is not always expending resources in the areas of bylaw, animal control, local police, fire service etc. to keep an eye on the operations.Licenced producers must comply with municipal bylaws such as zoning, building code and fire code requirements.The King bylaw provides definitions of cannabis production facilties and identifies where such facilities could be permitted, as well as lot, building standards and setbacks.She also said Health Canada should be keeping a better eye on these operations that do get charged and not let them continue.The councillor said there is less activity this year with the existing operations, but she said some of it may have to do with the fact that the price per pound has apparently dropped dramatically.?I am still not in favour of cannabis operations setting up in residential areas. The people who own/operate/work in these places may not mind the stench of their product, but it is offensive to those of us who have had the enjoyment of our properties affected.?Eek said another issue is still the dogs at these operations, who bark constantly. There's a danger that if they get loose, they may attack people.Aside from the loopholes, Eek said producers are making other products out of cannabis.?I am flabbergasted that the powers that be did not foresee the darker side of cannabis operations running rampant,? she said.Eek pointed out we have an opioid crisis, and gun problem in Toronto, and other areas.?It is startling to me, at least, that the powers that be aren't making the connection between illegal amounts of cannabis being grown under licence here, which is being used as currency to purchase guns and methamphetamines from our neighbours to the south (U.S.) etc. and brought here.?Sources indicate that in 2020 in York Region members of York Regional Police Guns, Gangs and Drug Enforcement Unit completed Project Greensweep which targeted illegally operated grow operations. Almost all were found to be operating with Health Canada Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Program licences for the sole purpose of organized crime groups.Sources also note most Health Canada Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Program licences were seen at illegal grow operations in York Region and GTA with the minimum daily gram authorized amount being 90 grams of medical cannabis usage per day recommended by a physician or healthcare practitioner.