

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Town Takes Leadership Role to Address Cannabis Production in Rural Municipalities

(East Gwillimbury, ON) – July 2, 2020 – The Council of the Town of East Gwillimbury has taken a leadership role to further address unregulated cannabis production facilities in rural municipalities. At the June 23, 2020 Council Meeting, a resolution was passed requesting the Minister of Health and Attorney General establish a multi-partner committee to coordinate efforts and increase communications between the relevant jurisdictions and agencies including the federal, provincial, and municipal governments as well as the relevant police services. This coordination will help to ensure that these facilities are fully compliant with all levels of legislation.

The Town currently has a number of facilities where individuals have used personal medical licenses to establish significant cannabis production facilities without required municipal approvals such as zoning permissions, building permits, and Emergency Service inspections.

“This is a difficult issue to navigate as the majority of licensing and regulations have been created by Health Canada, and yet there has not been appropriate communications or tools provided to municipalities to ensure that these facilities are created in a safe and controlled manner. East Gwillimbury is a proud supporter of economic development and our farming community, but these sites pose a health and safety risk to building occupants, neighbours, and first responders. Council passed this resolution to invite the Minister of Health, the Attorney General and other rural municipalities to the table to begin discussions to ensure that those who wish to grow medical cannabis are able to do so in a safe manner,” said Mayor Virginia Hackson.

The following resolution was passed at Council on June 23, 2020 to support this request:

WHEREAS the Federal Government has enacted the Cannabis Act and created a regime for the production, possession, distribution and sale of cannabis in Canada for recreational and medical use; and

WHEREAS Health Canada administers a system of licences and registrations required for the legal production, possession, distribution and sale of cannabis in Canada; and

WHEREAS federal licences issued to commercial cannabis producers compel producers to follow strict criteria that include an obligation to provide advance notice of commercial production to local municipalities and first responders; and

WHEREAS Health Canada issues registrations to individuals for the production of cannabis for personal medical consumption; and

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WHEREAS Health Canada advises personal medical registrants that they are expected to comply with all provincial/territorial and municipal laws including local by-laws about zoning, electrical safety, fire safety, together with all related inspection and remediation requirements; and

WHEREAS the conditions of a medical registration do not require personal producers to provide advance notice of production to local municipalities and first responders, nor are personal producers required to provide evidence of compliance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS absent Health Canada requirements of: (1) advance notice of cannabis production to municipalities and first responders; and (2) evidence of compliance with applicable law, multiple registrants are consolidating their medical cannabis production at sites located in the Town's rural and residential zones where cannabis production is prohibited; and

WHEREAS registrants have re-purposed existing structures or built greenhouses for the production of cannabis without obtaining building and other required permits, and without required Building Code and Fire Code inspections, creating health and safety risks for building occupants and first responders; and

WHEREAS prohibited cannabis production in the Town's rural and residential zones is a nuisance to neighbouring residents and the public at large as the result of odor and light pollution associated with unregulated cannabis production; and

WHEREAS municipalities have cumbersome enforcement tools that are primarily limited to costly and protracted prosecutions under the Planning Act (Ontario) and the Building Code Act (Ontario);

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT: The Council of the Town of East Gwillimbury respectfully requests that the federal Minister of Health and Attorney General establish a committee of rural municipalities to work together to propose amendments to the Cannabis Act that will remedy the problems experienced by municipalities as the result of the Cannabis Act and Health Canada's administration of the medical registration regime; and

THAT Town staff pursue a common front with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the York Region municipalities in seeking amendments to the Cannabis Act that will remedy the problems experienced by municipalities as the result of the Cannabis Act and Health Canada's administration of the medical registration regime; and

THAT this resolution be forwarded to the The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health (Canada), The Honourable David Lametti, Minister of Justice and

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Attorney General of Canada, The Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health (Ontario), Doug Downey, Attorney General of Ontario, Scot Davidson, MP York-Simcoe, Tony Van Bynen, MP Newmarket-Aurora, Hon. Caroline Mulroney, MPP York-Simcoe, Association of Municipalities Ontario, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Ontario Association Of Fire Chiefs, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association, and York Region Municipalities.

Council is requesting that if anyone has questions or concerns about a facility that appears to be proceeding without the necessary permissions and approvals to email the Town's By-law department at bylaws@eastgwillimbury.ca or contact the Municipal Enforcement branch directly at 905-478-4282 ext. 1123. For more information residents are encouraged to visit www.eastgwillimbury.ca/cannabis.

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For more information:

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