

Medical marijuana facility proposed for North Hastings

By Jim Eadie

Just as the Hastings county Director of Planning Brian McComb is undertaking some revisions to his draft plan for the county due to the rumblings coming out of some northern municipalities, primarily Reeve Dan McCaw and the Township of Wollaston council, a new wrinkle has arisen.

The Hastings County planning director has been trying to complete the draft of a new "official plan" to comply with new provincial rules, and the needs of the various rural and urban municipalities. The draft will eventually be released for review and comment later this year.

Now, the county planning board has received over a dozen enquiries from potential investors interested in building and operating "Medical Marijuana Production Facilities" (MMPF).

As of April 1, the federal government is licensing private investors to produce medical marijuana for medical patients who have prescriptions issued by a medical doctor. To make sure that the businesses are working in compliance with regulations, waste management from companies such as [GAIACA](#), need to be implemented to make sure that the surrounding area is safe for patients.

"We have had some calls about this at the township office," said Wollaston Township clerk Jennifer Cohen during the May 13 regular council meeting.

The first MMPF to go into operation in Ontario occupies the old Hershey factory in Smiths Falls.

McCaw told council that he could see two problems establishing such a business here.

"The book of regulations from the federal government is about this thick," he said, holding his thumb and index finger about one inch apart. He also noted that these facilities must be indoor "grow op" type operations, and would consume immense amounts of electricity for heat and lighting.

"There aren't too many places in Wollaston Township that would have a big enough hydro line."

Due to this new business concept and its special circumstances, changes will have to be made to municipal by-laws and the official plan to accommodate it.

With the recent changes to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the rules change for the permitted activities of a licensed producer and allow production, selling, shipping and delivering of this product, regulated by the federal government. Production and storage must take place in a closed facility with 24-hour security, and cannot occur near or in a residential building. The MMPF license applicant must notify the local municipality, fire authorities and police service, and although the municipality cannot prohibit this land use, the licensee is expected to comply with municipal by-laws and building codes.

McComb has just provided Hastings County municipalities with a suggested zoning by-law amendment to use as a template for their own, as well as draft changes to policies of the official plan to review.

Wollaston council has invited McComb to a meeting in the near future to bring local municipalities up to date on the new revisions to the draft official plan, as well as to address MMPF implications from a planning perspective. Other northern municipal officials, as well as the public will be invited to attend. Cohen is to arrange a date and place for this meeting, which will be announced.

