

CANNABIS MEETING

Community Roundtable on Cannabis Safety
September 21st, 2018
340 Raglan St. S.
Renfrew, Ontario
9:00 AM

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of the meeting was to itemize public health concerns, safeguards, and other issues relating to the pending legalization of recreational cannabis use and develop a plan of action. All mayors were invited together with representatives from emergency services, community organizations and businesses.

Given an ongoing municipal election and prior commitments we were fortunate to have in attendance:

Tom Peckett, Mayor, McNab/Braeside Township;
Bob Kingsbury, Mayor, Horton Township;
Dan Lynch, Councillor, Town of Arnprior;
Stanley Pecoskie, Councillor, Township of Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards;
Brian Hugli, Councillor, Township of Laurentian Valley;
Bob Gareau, Fire Chief, Township of Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards;
Lorna Hudder, CAO, Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards Township;
Corwin Quade, Fire Chief, Township of Madawaska Valley;
Tim Schison, local business owner, Tim Schison & Son Trucking;
Jim Miller, local stakeholder;
Ivan Burton, Town Planner, Town of Renfrew;
Lisa Vincent, Chair, Renfrew Business Improvement Area;
Liana Sullivan, Executive Director, McKay Manor;
Colin Slight, Detachment Commander, Renfrew OPP;
Janice Sawbridge, Constable, Renfrew OPP;
Chad Culbert, D/S Sgt., Renfrew OPP.

CONCERNS

ACCESSIBILITY TO CHILDREN

Safe storage rules as for firearms should be in place.

Even though edibles attractive to children will continue to be illegal, they are already for sale on First Nations Reserves to the wider public.

Cannabis baked goods and confectioneries are available online.

Child poisonings are already occurring.

For some individuals cannabis is a gateway to harder drugs.

HEALTH

Hospital emergency departments and paramedic services are already under capacity. More accidents and overdoses will result in higher demand, which means longer wait times, added costs and higher taxes.

Access to addiction treatment centres is already limited.

Residue from second hand smoke may cause problems for general public.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution is emitted into the atmosphere during cannabis combustion.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

How does a supervisor ensure workers are not impaired?

What aspects must be included in setting an employment policy on cannabis use?

How will coverage for various types of insurance be impacted by employee cannabis use?

Staffing shortages may occur after hours for unexpected situations such as the need the snow plowing on the weekends. If a snowplow driver cannot come to work because cannabis has been used within 48 hours, and no one else is available, the municipality may be liable if an accident occurs because the road has not been cleared.

What can employers do to safeguard the use of dangerous equipment by users (medical or personnel)?

Concerns were raised over volunteer responders, who may have used cannabis prior to going to a call. While rules are in place for limits on alcohol impairment, the same cannot be done for cannabis at this point because the time it takes for THC to leave the body differs from person to person.

CANNABIS RETAIL LOCATIONS

Municipalities are undecided as to whether or not to agree to having retail cannabis stores within their jurisdictions.

If retail stores are permitted, the inference is that Council is condoning the use of cannabis. Additional, health, social and financial costs will ensue.

It is difficult to weigh the risks versus the benefits of permitting retail stores.

Proximity to schools, and other restrictions councils may impose are unclear.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Policing costs to municipalities (i.e., ratepayers) will rise after substantial increases have already occurred.

Summons pertaining to charges dealing with cannabis, may delay trials for violent and other major crimes. The Jordan Decision, requiring cases to be heard within 18 months, may result in an increased number of cases being dropped.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario suggested that bylaw enforcement officers be tasked with policing cannabis related complaints to avoid higher policing costs. Municipal leaders do not want to put their bylaw enforcement officers into potentially high risk situations.

Health Canada issues licences for “grow ops”, but does not advise municipalities or police forces as to who is licensed. Medical users may be permitted to have more than four plants by Health Canada. OPP do not have a listing of Health Canada Permits which makes enforcement of cannabis plant limits complicated.

LANDLORD/TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Some ratepayers want the municipalities to put restrictions on cannabis use in multi-residential buildings. Were this to be done, landlords still have no access to Medical Marijuana verification resources. Even the OPP can only verify Medical Marijuana Certificates by contacting Health Canada.

The Landlord Tenant Tribunal will be responsible for disputes.

Landlords want to know what powers they have over the growing and use of cannabis in apartments.

OPP COMMENTS

The OPP is committed to supporting a safe, healthy community, and will enforce the new laws, which are a combination of federal laws provincial laws.

It is a bit complex in the sense that the federal domain has established guidelines for the production and distribution, selling and possession of cannabis, but it has been turned over to the provincial government to manage the process as a law enforcement agency.

The OPP's role is to enforce, and investigate criminal cannabis incidents focusing on the apprehension of those, who produce and or import cannabis outside the parameters of the legislation.

The Ontario legislature has recently opened the examination of issuing of tickets to someone, who has possession of over 30 grams, but under 50 grams. That area will be considered to be a summary offence as opposed to charge offence.

The OPP established a working group in 2017, and it comprised many facets of its organization. Approximately 5,000 uniformed officers need to be educated on these changes in the law. Another cannabis aspect the OPP also has to deal is drug impaired driving. As well, they are dealing with human needs, their policies, standard authorization, operational policies, and community engagement.

With respect to communication strategy, they want to ensure that all of their members are well-informed, and equally that Ontarians know the laws rules and dangers related to cannabis. They are doing internal communication messaging for members to stay sharp, awareness campaign for members today, so that they are educated.

Learning modules, the police knowledge Network, and externally they are engaging the robust social media campaign Facebook Twitter Instagram. The Ontario Police College has the lead on developing information packages and the challenge for the OPP Is it has 5,800 uniformed members, and they need to develop training timelines.

Drug impairment driving is governed by the same rules as alcohol impaired driving. So, the challenge for the OPP is that someone in some jurisdictions there are zero tolerance for young drivers and novice drivers. The Drager DrugTest 5000 has been approved to measure THC. The OPP is working through the testing process to determine whether or not the new instrument works.

Other tools, such as the standard field sobriety testing program are being used, and it is hoped that in the next five years every uniformed member training with SMS will be educated. This is to be paid by the Federal Government.

In addition the OPP has the drug recognition expert program. This is a higher level of training that teaches the officers to go through assessments of physical abilities, physical observations, and language.

The education piece must ensure an officer can first recognize how much 30 grams looks like. The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program is given to grade 6 level as well as some high schools.

ACTION PLAN

1. Research how other jurisdictions have dealt with the legalization of cannabis.

See <https://laneworksafe.com.au>.

2. *Subsequent to our meeting the Province of Ontario announced The Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018, which spells out that the number of cannabis retail outlets, and all site locations will be decided by the Province. Request a briefing to explain to communities how the system works.
3. Communicate with MPP John Yakabuski to ensure funding put from the proceeds of cannabis are directed to cover the added costs associated with the legalization of cannabis to municipalities are allocated directly to them.
4. Plan Town Hall Meetings as necessary to listen to problems arising from cannabis legalization so that solutions can be formulated and implemented before situations worsen.
5. Organize a Workplace Safety and Employment Policy seminar to assist job providers in developing employment policies to meet their requirements.
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