



City of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maple Ridge Seeks Greater Transparency on Medical Marihuana Facility Development

Maple Ridge, BC: “Residents in Whonnock are understandably upset that no notification was provided to them regarding a Medical Marihuana Facility being erected in their neighbourhood,” said Mayor Nicole Read. “Medical Marihuana Facilities are a permitted use on Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) designated lands and municipalities have received instruction from the Province that they are not to be prohibited. The Federal process of issuing a licence at the end of the building phase further limits our City’s ability to enact and uphold regulations. Add to this that privacy legislation prevents the City from releasing specific details about the facilities, such as location, and the net result is a facility popping up on a parcel of ALR land in a residential neighbourhood without prior notice to our residents. That’s not good enough.”

Concerns raised by Whonnock residents prompted immediate action from Maple Ridge Council and staff. Attempts to obtain information regarding the status of the 13 applications to Health Canada for facilities in Maple Ridge have been met with no success. Only four of the 13 proposed facilities have applied for building permits and only general building permit information can be released to the public.

The City of Maple Ridge is now seeking an opinion from the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner concerning the City’s ability to release facility details to the public. In the case of the facility being erected in Whonnock, Mayor Read expressed Council’s gratitude that the applicant has offered to host a public forum at Whonnock Community Centre on Monday, March 23, 2015 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm to provide area residents with more information. The applicant recognizes that reaching out to the community is an important next step.

BACKGROUND:

In December of 2012 the Federal Minister of Health announced the new program called 'Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulation' at a media conference held at Maple Ridge's Fire Hall No. 1. Like most local governments in Canada, Maple Ridge had been advocating for a change in the 'personal grow' permits due to the numerous complaints from local governments, police, fire departments and the general public who were impacted by deficiencies in the management of that program.

The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) has ruled that these facilities are a permitted use in lands that are part of the ALR and that municipal governments cannot prohibit their development. Maple Ridge enacted a new bylaw to regulate the development of medical marihuana facilities in December of 2013. Consistent with the ALC ruling, the Maple Ridge bylaw outlines the conditions for the development of Medical Marihuana on lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve in our community. The Bylaw sets guidelines around their proximity to residential dwellings, schools, streams, wells and other similar facilities.

An amendment to the City's bylaw has been deferred as Council and staff seek further information and await the opinion from the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner. Mayor Read will provide an update after that ruling is made.

For more information please contact Mayor Nicole Read by email at nread@mapleridge.ca or by phone at 604-463-5221.