

NEWS BRIEFS

**Drugs seized**

A routine traffic stop resulted in a drug seizure for Okotoks RCMP. On Nov. 25, Okotoks Municipal Enforcement (OME) called RCMP for backup after pulling over a Chrysler sedan. It was determined the driver of the vehicle didn't have a license and the vehicle was uninsured and unregistered. During a subsequent inventory of the vehicle, a large bag containing 1.3 kg of marijuana was found. The officer then called Okotoks RCMP, which began investigating the driver of the vehicle for potential drug charges. On Nov. 28, RCMP arrested and charged Derek Grouette with possession of marijuana for the purposes of trafficking.

A missing person's report also netted drugs and cash earlier in the fall. On Oct. 30, RCMP were called to assist a family looking for a young man whose whereabouts were unknown. The youth was located in a vehicle close to the family's residence, which was seized due to several traffic offences. During a search of the vehicle, RCMP found a backpack containing 466 grams of marijuana with an estimated street value of \$5,000, a pair of brass knuckles, \$1,100 in cash and the missing youth's identification card. An Okotoks youth has been charged with possession of a controlled substance and possession of a prohibited weapon. The youth cannot be named due to provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

**Charity Checkstop**

The seventh annual Charity Checkstop is set for Dec. 11 to support the Rowan House Emergency Shelter and the Okotoks Food Bank. The event will be held on Milligan Drive near the Okotoks Recreation Centre from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Emergency personnel from Okotoks Municipal Enforcement, RCMP, fire department, MD of Foothills patrol and Foothills Victims Services will be on hand to collect donations of cash, toys and food. Anyone can take food donations to the Okotoks Recycling Centre where a bin has been set up to support the Okotoks Food Bank.

**Medical marijuana rules changing**  
*Foothills: MD studying how to adapt to changes*

**By Don Patterson**  
*Assistant Editor*

New federal rules for medical marijuana set to come into effect in the spring have municipalities scrambling to figure out how to manage what could become a new industry within their borders.

Under new federal regulations announced earlier this year, after March 2014 people with prescriptions for marijuana will no longer be able to grow their own. This leaves licensed producers as the only legal source of medical marijuana.

MD of Foothills Coun. Suzanne Oel said the MD is working on plans to determine how it will regulate legal, licensed medical marijuana growing operations that could start to sprout up.

"We have this new responsibility and we need to figure out how we're going to manage it," she said.

The issue has been dis-



SUZANNE OEL  
*MD of Foothills councillor*

cussed in camera by MD council, but the issue will come to a public council meeting in January. As such, she said she can't reveal details of what the MD is looking at right now.

However, she said it's something the MD needs to deal with soon.

By the end of March 2014, medical marijuana users will only be permitted to get the drug from licensed producers. As well, Health Canada is getting out of the business of producing and distributing medical marijuana starting in April.

Federal regulations outline a long list of rules for

licensed producers, regarding building standards, operating practices and strict security measures for licensed production facilities. Licensed producers must also share details of their operations with local police.

Production will not be allowed in homes and municipal zoning laws will need to be respected.

Since Health Canada created the Marijuana Medical Access Program in 2001, the number of people authorized to use it has grown from 5,000 to 30,000. With the growth of the program, the federal government brought in the changes to treat marijuana like other narcotics used for medical purposes and provide access to the drug under secure conditions.

Oel said there are still a number of unanswered questions that need to be considered, such as appropriate locations, residents' concerns and security.

"We have to consider that there's a possibility of

the public not wanting it, while the applicants coming forward would have a right to do it under federal guidelines," said Oel. "We would have to consider all these things."

The head of the Priddis Millarville Residents Association (PMRA) said residents would not likely be supportive of medical marijuana operations being allowed on or near residential areas for a number of reasons, such as security and the potential of abuse.

"If it is run as a business, in other words licensees could grow marijuana, then you can't have a business everywhere in every backyard," said Francis Dover. "You have to have it in certain industrial areas and that might be a way of zoning it."

She understands why the MD needs to look at the issue.

"They need to put a template and a structure in place, I totally see that," said Dover.

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