OPINION

Conflicts of interest stir the pot

Reefer madness:

Provincial law is toothless when it comes to regulating wild west of medical marijuana



t is rare that a municipal councillor issues a war call over a development permit.

But that's exactly what Sechelt's Chris Moore did in late July during a debate over a permit for Medma Cannabis Pharms Inc., one of three medical marijuana companies look-ing to set up in Sechelt. As council discussed a variance to

As council discussed a variance to allow the two-storey, 433-squaremetre production facility, Moore stated: "Frankly, I'll be extremely disappointed if this is not granted. In fact, it will be a war call for me."

In an interview this week, Moore

insisted that what had stirred his passion was the process of trying to stop a medical marijuana company

using a development permit.

Had the company planned to grow
tomatoes, he said he would be just

Two Been an advocate for legalization (of marijuana) for some time. But, when it comes to voting (on Medma), it's not my land and I don't have any pecuniary interests," Moore said in an interview this week.

But the councillor is more than just an advocate and proponent of the small, coastal community becoming a hub for legal pot production.

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Moore is a director of Cannabis
Ventures Inc., a California-based,
penny-stock company. It is one of
more than 1,000 that has applied to
Health Canada for a licence to build
a large-scale grow-op.
He is also the sole director of
Bounty Development Corp., which
owns the Sechelt property where
CVI plans to build.

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Moore has never publicly disclosed his corporate interests, although he says he has told others on council.

His business interests were made

public by a couple of citizens who found the corporate documents on the Internet.

B.C.'s Financial Disclosures Act requires municipal politicians to file an annual statement in the first two eeks of the year detailing what they



as upset.

#I've been an advocate for legal- A new bylaw in Sechelt, to be voted on this fall, would permit grow-ops in all industrial and agricultural zones.

own and earn.

And since Cannabis Ventures Inc. wasn't incorporated until April 2014, Moore couldn't have disclosed

"I don't know if I have to update (the annual filing)," he said. "I'm not aware of any instruction like that. ... I don't recall any need to do that.

"Most people in small communi-ties know what's going on, so it's self-policing. They probably know better ... what's going on than in big cities where people can hide out." But the Community Charter says

that even if councillors and mayors have not declared a direct or indirect pecuniary interest, they are for-bidden from attending meetings or even parts of meetings where the matter is discussed and from partic-ipating in any discussions or votes and attempting to influence the vot-ing on the license.

and attempting to influence the vot-ing on the issue.

The penalty "may be" disqualifi-cation from office "unless the con-travention was done inadvertently or because of an error in judgment made in good faith."

That disqualification is only until

the next election, which in this case is November. And Moore is adamant

is November. And Moore is adamant that he is not running again.

The Charter also says a council member "could" be required to give up any realized financial gain. But that would only happen if 10 electors or two-thirds of council take it to the B.C. Supreme Court for a ruling.

Since his corporate interests have

Since his corporate interests have become public, Moore has vowed not to vote later this fall on a new zoning bylaw, which would permit commercial grow-ops in all indus-trial zones as well as resource and agricultural zones, and would make Sechelt one of the first B.C. munic-ipalities to fully embrace medical

narijuana production. Moore won't participate in the public hearings that he has been a proponent for, even though he said he has recommended to staff some people who he thinks should be invited to explain the Health Canada licensing process as well as the benefits of medical marijuana pro-duction to individuals as well as the community

community.

"Frankly, if this municipality doesn't want medical marijuana, I don't give a shit," said Moore.

"Although I think it would be unfortungte." unfortunate.

Moore is not the only one on Sechelt's seven-member council with ties to a medical marijuana

company.

Councillor Tom Lamb owns a building currently rented by a company that operated under the old pot-growing laws that is attempting certification under the new rules. Lamb declined to name

the company. In an interview on Friday, Lamb said he will be asking for the district solicitor's opinion on whether he is in a conflict of interest before he votes on any matters related to marijuana, including the zoning

But Lamb says he has participated in some earlier council dis-cussions, including a presentation by a representative from a medical marijuana company — not the one he rents to or Medma — that wants to set up on Sechelt.

It has all been in an effort to edu-

cate himself, he said.
"The federal government has done a very, very poor job of bringing this a very, very poor job of or langing this medical marijuana thing to where it is today," Lamb said. "The new reg-ulations have brought some chaos and I don't understand all of what's happening, which is why I want to get educated."

The genesis of all of this is Canada's new medical-marijuana regulations that shut down close to 30,000 small growers and is replacing them with a few, large grow-ops. It set off a corporate frenzy, with legitimate companies (as well as

many penny-stock companies making extravagant claims) attempting to cash in on what are touted to be

heady, windfall returns.
Getting a licence requires companies to prove that they have properly zoned property somewhere, which is how reefer madness arrived in town halls across the country and ended up in the laps of people like Moore and Lamb.

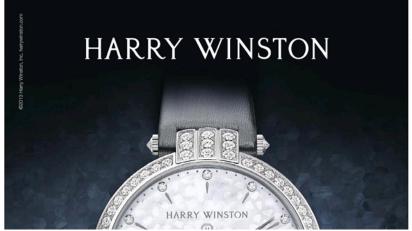
But what's troubling to residents in Sechelt and elsewhere is the dou-ble secrecy surrounding medical marijuana.

First, the federal government refuses to disclose all of the names of companies that have received medi-cal marijuana licences and refuses to release the names of those that are seeking approval, citing privacy legislation.

Secondly, provincial law doesn't require transparency when it comes to corporate disclosures. Instead or corporate disclosures. Instead of depending on self-disclosure at meetings, it ought to require municipal officials and employ-ees to not only make annual dec-larations of assets, interests and income, but do so whenever there s a change. What's ironic is that because gov-

ernments make it so difficult to fig-ure out who is doing what where and, possibly, for whom, citizens' best source of information is the same stock touts. And they are the only people that the government has seen fit to warn citizens about.

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