

Pot-laws protest tour touched Orangeville

By DAN PELTON
Staff Reporter

As Orangeville police looked on, Vancouver-based marijuana legalization advocate Marc Emery addressed a small but supportive crowd Saturday at Alexander Muir Park next to Town Hall.

Mr. Emery, also known as "The Prince of Pot," spoke against proposals in federal Bill C-15 that anyone caught with five or more marijuana plants face a mandatory minimum of six months in prison.

The Harper government's legislation also stipulates that, if growing is done on a property that

belongs to another person or in an area where it may present a hazard to children, minimum jail time will be nine months.

Publisher of Cannabis Culture Magazine and founder of the B.C. Marijuana Party, Mr. Emery is facing extradition to the United States where he faces a possible

10 years in jail for his business selling marijuana seeds, which is legal in Canada but illegal in the U.S.

U.S. authorities maintain that Mr. Emery's selling of seeds is equivalent to trafficking in the drug itself.

An underlying theme in his speech was that the mandatory incarceration outlined in Bill C-15 will do more harm than good. "The best place for criminal gangs to recruit young people is in jail," he said.

"People are going into jail as small-time drug dealers and coming out as full-time gang members."

His wife Jody said marijuana possession "is a victimless crime. The only victims are the people put in jail when they don't need to be."

Prior to the meeting, police informed event organizers that they were staging a public event without permission. They remained in the vicinity during Mr. Emery's speech but did not interfere.

Among those in the crowd was a young woman who said she and her friends had been issued tickets by police for smoking marijuana and were barred from all Orangeville public parks for a year.

She added that she had no recourse to challenge the decision.

Mr. Emery also reminded the crowd, composed mostly of people in their teens to late 20s, that they needed to get out and vote

if they wanted change. "The only way to defend your autonomy is to get involved," he said.

He urged them to vote for the Green Party, which has come out in support of decriminalizing marijuana and proposes that it be taxed and regulated like alcohol and tobacco.

Dufferin-Caledon Green candidate and party finance critic Ard Van Leeuwen was in attendance.

"The Green Party is on record for the decriminalization of marijuana and we support Marc Emery's efforts in this regard."

He said revenues from taxation of marijuana — which, by some estimates, is an \$18 billion underground business in Canada — could bring up to \$1.5 billion into federal coffers.

Mr. Van Leeuwen pointed to a 2002 Senate committee report that said "scientific evidence overwhelmingly indicates that

cannabis is substantially less harmful than alcohol and should be treated not as a criminal issue but as a social and public health issue."

The same committee also said, however, that "we are not endorsing cannabis use for recreational consumption. Whether or not an individual uses marijuana should be a personal choice that is not subject to criminal penalties."

"But we have come to the conclusion that, as a drug, it should be regulated by the State much as we do for wine and beer, hence our preference for legalization over decriminalization."

Mr. Van Leeuwen also said the Green Party feels the justice system would be better off to shift its focus from young, first-time marijuana offenders and, instead, get tougher with white-collar crime and violent offenders.



Photo/DAN PELTON

MARC EMERY, a marijuana legalization advocate from Vancouver, greets an Orangeville police officer prior to speaking at Alexander Muir Park on Saturday.

Shelburne gains in new doctor program

By WES KELLER
Freelance Reporter

Orangeville's successful physician recruitment program might have removed it from eligibility for locum and other provincial funding for rural doctors, but Shelburne is set to gain increased incentives.

The newly announced provincial funding provides as much as just more than \$1,000 a day for physicians who are willing to spend some time as rural locums (substituting for doctors who are on vacation or otherwise away from their practices).

Hitherto, says Shelburne Mayor Ed

Crewson who heads the search committee for the Shelburne-based underserved area serving the town plus the townships of Amaranth, Melancthon and Mulmur, the only available program would pay a maximum of \$434 a day "but the doctors all wanted \$1,000."

Mr. Crewson said Orangeville has appeared to be recruiting doctors on a weekly basis, "but we haven't recruited a doctor in six years. (The Orangeville committee) has been doing a good job for Orangeville."


On the basis of a new funding formula, Orangeville was given a score of eight whereas

Shelburne, because of a lack of doctors, scored 40 points to make it eligible for the incentives.

Pat Webster, secretary of the Shelburne committee, said the 40 points would automatically qualify Shelburne for the maximum funding at the Mel Lloyd Centre.

And there are local incentives. The Centre

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