

# Neighbourhood goes to pot over marijuana odours

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Darryll Godin tries to enjoy the backyard of his Balsam Street home in Welland, despite the odour emanating from a Foss Road medical marijuana greenhouse in neighbouring Pelham. - Allan Benner, The St. Catharines Standard

Darryll Godin has worked hard to make his Balsam Street home an oasis.

He has owned his Welland home for more than 20 years, with a view unencumbered by backyard fences looking across acres of farm fields on the Pelham side of the municipal border.

"This is a neighbourhood unlike any other," Godin said in an interview last week.

"We love it here ... We want to be able to sit out here and enjoy this. This is like being up north. There are no fences. It's beautiful. It's like our own little park back here."

But as the warmth of spring weather returned to the neighbourhood, those residents are loath to even open their windows.

"We can't enjoy it now because it smells like s---."

The "skunky" odour has almost always been present to varying degrees since a medical marijuana greenhouse began operations in Pelham, less than a kilometre west on Foss Road.

At times, the neighbours say the smell can be unbearable.

Norman Guay said the smell is so bad he can't open his windows, and he's worried about turning on his air conditioner on a hot day, fearing it will bring the odour inside.

"I'm 74 years old. I'd like to finish the last 10 or 12 years of my life in peace, where I don't have to smell s--- every day. That's what it's like," Guay said.

"My house didn't smell like that before. It smells and it's not pleasant. You can't open your windows."

He's also concerned about the impact the odour could have on property values.

"I'll have a \$500,000 or \$600,000 house sitting over there and now it's going to be worth \$350,000," he said, adding no one who smells the air would want to buy it.

"It's the quality of life and our property value. Those are the concerns," Guay said. "Enough is enough."

"You want to smell fresh grass and flowers in the spring," said Balsam Street resident Philip Peloquin. "You don't want to smell that."

Meanwhile, neighbours say greenhouse lighting shines brightly throughout the night, casting an un-natural glow into the clouds.

And residents fear the problems will get worse if the greenhouse operation is expanded.

Niagara Centre MP Vance Badawey said he hopes an upcoming unannounced inspection by Health Canada will mean residents will no longer have to tolerate the odour.

Redecan Pharm greenhouse spokesperson Chloe Mills said the company — it has invested more than \$25 million in the greenhouse so far — is taking neighbour's concerns seriously, and is committed to being a responsible member of the community while complying with Health Canada regulations.

"People close to the facility may sometimes experience variations of odours due to the changing weather, humidity or direction of wind," she said in an email.

She said the company uses a "cutting-edge eco odour-management system" that uses essential oils to combat and neutralize cannabis odours.

"What residents may be smelling is not cannabis but, rather, the neutralized version of the cannabis odour," she said. "The ecolo system works with different scent profiles and essential oils to changing the odour profiles."

Mills said the company has taken additional steps to mitigate the impact on residents, since concerns were first raised publicly earlier this year.

"Since February, we are using alternate scent profile in the ecolo system," Mills said. "We have added variable speed motors on the exhaust fans of the greenhouse to reduce intensity of the venting."

She said the company that employs more than 50 people also uses "state-of-the-art, custom designed HVAC systems with carbon filters and the latest venting and odour-control technologies in production areas."

"As with any cannabis-producing operation, there are smells that are produced from time to time at our facility in Fenwick," she added. "Our team has been in compliance with all Health Canada regulations since the beginning."

Regarding the concerns about the lights, Mills said the greenhouse uses 3,000 high-powered 1,000-watt lights in the growing area, but blackout systems are in place to prevent the light from escaping. There is, however, another room with 140 LED lights, each rated at 350 watts, and that room does not have a blackout system — yet.

She said that blackout system is expected to be completed by August.

West Niagara MP Dean Allison said he, too, has reached out to Health Canada, as well as the company itself.

He said it's up to Health Canada to regulate and enforce its regulations, but "not much of that happens."

However, he said Redecan "wants to work with residents."

"I believe they want to be good neighbours. They don't want to have issues all the time, forever," Allison said.

"But obviously if the smell is still there, more needs to be done."

Despite assurances that the greenhouse complies with Health Canada regulations, Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn disagrees.

Health Canada regulations, he said, say no odours should be emanating from the greenhouse. And that is clearly not the case on Foss Road.

He said town staff have been keeping a record of each of the complaints they receive from residents while also working with Welland Ward 1 Coun. Mark Carl and the neighbouring city, regarding concerns raised by residents on Welland's side of the border.

Those concerns are being passed on to Health Canada, Augustyn added.

"We're on it," Badawey said. "With the completes being made, Health Canada has committed to inspecting the site."

He said there are "very stringent controls" on the commercial production of medical cannabis, as well as ensuring that unannounced inspections do happen.

Badawey said Health Canada has several options when dealing with growers that do not meet controls — including suspending or revoking licences if warranted.

"Of course that includes odour, and odour for the most part is the biggest complaint I've been receiving," he said.

"Under the conditions that they are to operate, there will not be any odours."

Badawey said neighbours of other licensed marijuana growers have shared similar complaints, including neighbours of a greenhouse in Port Colborne.

He advised that anyone with concerns email Health Canada at: [hc.cmc.sc@canada.ca](mailto:hc.cmc.sc@canada.ca).

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