

# Marihuana Grow Operations

*Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.*

## A Danger to Communities

Beyond the negative effects marihuana can have on the health and social well-being of users, and the growing involvement of organized crime in marihuana cultivation and trafficking pose a serious threat to the safety of our communities. The increasing number of marihuana grow operations (MGOs) is of particular concern.

Because of the large profits that can be obtained MGOs are attracting the attention of organized crime groups, thus increasing the potential for violence. The majority of grow operations are located in residential areas. They pose a significant fire and safety hazard because of the large amounts of electricity required. Illegal hook-ups and dangerous wiring are common among grow operations. Between 1995 and 2000, there were 15 electrocutions related to MGOs in British Columbia alone. Approximately one in 10 illegal electrical bypasses results in a fire, endangering surrounding properties and innocent lives. The Electricity Distributors Association of Ontario estimates that MGOs steal an average of \$1,500 worth of electricity each, per month. These costs are passed on to consumers in the form of higher utility rates.

Firearms, and potentially lethal booby traps, intended to protect the marihuana from thieves, are becoming increasingly common features of MGOs. Innocent people have become victims as a result of attempts to steal marihuana plants at a wrong address.

The partners in Canada's Drug Strategy are taking a balanced approach to addressing the threat of MGOs. Innovative public awareness and education campaigns seek to reduce the demand for marihuana and other illegal drugs. The RCMP has appointed a National Coordinator for Marihuana Grow Operations to work with law enforcement agencies across Canada to develop and implement a strategic, national enforcement response. This includes the creation of an enforcement framework based on the best practices of police agencies across Canada to better coordinate the efforts of police at all levels, and ensure that best practices are implemented.

In November 2004, the RCMP also hosted the first National Conference on Illegal Marihuana Grow Operations. Conference participants represented many of the agencies that work on, or are affected by, marihuana grow operations. This was the first time all parties from across the country came together to discuss this multi-faceted issue.

Commitments were obtained from various representatives in such areas as MGO communications and messaging, property protection, safety of first responders, seized equipment management and information sharing.

A coordinated national approach to marihuana grow operations will also allow Canadian enforcement agencies to further enhance their cooperation with the international law enforcement community to help curb marihuana production and distribution.

*To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy, please visit [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds)*

*Find out what governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners are doing – National Framework for Action – Visit [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa)*

