



# ALERT

ALBERTA LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TEAMS

News release

July 14, 2011

The word "Alberta" is written in a stylized, cursive font. To the right of the word is a small square icon containing a stylized letter 'A'.

## Nine Calgary area marihuana grow operations dismantled

Calgary... Alberta Law Enforcement Response Team's Green Team South concluded an 18-month investigation with the seizure of over \$17 million worth of marihuana from nine Calgary-area marihuana grow operations. More than 80 criminal charges have been laid against nine people.

**ALERT Green Team South Staff Sergeant Tom Hanson will be available to comment on this investigation at 1 p.m., Thursday, July 14, at Calgary Police Service's Andrew Davison Building, 133 6 Avenue SE.**

Of the nine marihuana grow operations that were dismantled, two were discovered in Okotoks and Strathmore areas, and the rest were in Calgary. In total, officers seized over 13,500 marihuana plants and 44 kilograms of harvested marihuana, along with growing equipment. The street value of the marihuana is estimated at over \$17 million. Investigators discovered that the marihuana grow operations were connected to two organized crime groups working in collaboration. In separate investigations led by other law enforcement agencies, two grow operations dismantled in rural Alberta areas in 2010 are also believed to be connected to these two groups.

"This investigation confirmed that most large marihuana grow operations are connected to organized crime," says Staff Sergeant Tom Hanson. "Nearly all of the properties had dangerously compromised electrical and natural gas utilities, exemplifying the hazards inherent in many grow operations we dismantle."

Some of the homes were rented by people posing as legitimate families seeking accommodations, sometimes even accompanied by children or senior citizens. After using false names and counterfeit identification on the rental agreement, the group would then convert the property to a marihuana grow operation, causing extensive damage to the home. Property owners should be aware that insurance companies will not cover damage caused by marihuana grow operations; the cost of repairing damage is the responsibility of the homeowner. Home owners also risk permanent loss of their property as a result of seizure through civil forfeiture and proceeds of crime legislation.

Landlords are urged to:

- Request references and contact those references.
- Confirm and record information on the identification provided by the prospective renter.
- Conduct frequent inspections of the property as per the Landlord Tenant Act.
- Request a security clearance or criminal record check from potential renters. The request alone may dissuade criminals from choosing your home. Security clearances can be obtained through any police agency for a minimal cost.

Several agencies assisted the ALERT team in this investigation including Calgary Police Service, Okotoks RCMP, and Strathmore RCMP.

To report suspicious activity or a suspected marihuana grow operation in your community, contact Safer Communities and Neighborhoods at 1-866-960-7226 (SCAN) or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

Between January and June of this year, ALERT'S Green Team South has seized more than 24,500 marihuana plants worth approximately \$30 million.

ALERT is an umbrella organization established by the Government of Alberta to bring together the province's most sophisticated law enforcement resources to tackle serious and organized crime. Close to 400 municipal police, RCMP and sheriffs work for ALERT.

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