



# ALERT

ALBERTA LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TEAMS



**News release**

September 30, 2011

## Major Calgary-area blitz shuts down 18 marihuana grow operations

*ALERT, Calgary Police Service, and RCMP work together in three-day sweep*

*Calgary...* A major, three-day operation that included resources from the Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT), the Calgary Police Service (CPS), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), targeted and dismantled 18 marihuana grow operations located in the city of Calgary.

Between September 27 and 29, police seized over 8,920 marihuana plants in various stages of growth, and a large quantity of specialized equipment typically used by organized crime groups in the production and trafficking of marihuana.

Twenty-two charges have been laid against nine people.

Alberta Health Services inspected the properties and deemed 14 unfit for human habitation.

Last week, the RCMP launched a national Marihuana Grow Initiative to combat the prevalence of marihuana production being run and exploited by organized crime groups in Canada. This joint forces operation is an example of the collaboration envisioned within the Initiative and is the next step in building a coordinated, collective response to this issue across Canada.

"We have been laying the foundation for this type of operation in Calgary for some time," said Inspector Kevin Forsen, officer in charge of ALERT's Calgary Combined Forces Special Enforcement Team (CFSEU). "And now, with the RCMP's renewed commitment through the national Initiative, the time was right to move forward with a city-wide blitz."

The Calgary blitz will be the first of many similar operations the RCMP will run in conjunction with other policing partners across Canada.

"Marihuana grow operations harm communities. Wherever they exist, there's an increase in criminal activity and a greater chance of fire, explosions, and violence," stated Superintendent Eric Slinn, Director, Drug Branch. "This initiative is part of the RCMP's renewed commitment and priority to combat marihuana production controlled by organized crime groups."

Residents of Calgary know all too well the dangers associated with illegal grow operations. In 2009, the Citadel neighbourhood, and a number of families in particular, were devastated when an illegal grow operation caught on fire and damaged seven neighbouring homes. Just this summer, two house fires broke out in locations that were concealing dangerous marihuana grow operations.

"The Calgary Police Service has been working with multiple community partners for many years to tackle this issue in Calgary. The work of many has led to an increased awareness with the public who have been instrumental in assisting us in locating hundreds of grow ops over the years, as well as those seen in this week's operation," says Superintendent Guy Slater from the CPS Criminal Operations Division.

Last year, ALERT dismantled close to 200 marihuana grow operations in the Calgary area, 20 of which were fortified to varying degrees. As a result of the 200 dismantlings, ALERT seized 69,981 marihuana plants. Alberta Health Services deemed 151 grow operations unfit for human habitation.

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

-30-

For information on how to spot a marihuana grow operation, please visit: [www.alert-ab.ca](http://www.alert-ab.ca)

For information on the RCMP's Marihuana Grow Initiative, please visit:

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/drugs-droques/mgi-ircm/index-eng.htm>

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