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Marijuana Grow Ops

Houses and buildings used by marijuana growers are referred to as grow ops. If the grow op isn't in a house it's called a grow house. Police estimate that there are more than 50,000 grow ops across Canada.

The number keeps growing. Every community in the country is exposed to the risks from marijuana grow ops. They operate in every city, town and rural area across Canada. They are in big cities and little towns.

Grow houses are often located in residential areas, but they can also be found in commercial and agricultural locales. Sometimes they are clustered together, sometimes even on the same street.

Growers are learning new techniques and tricks all the time. Crop sitters will reside in the house to make it look lived in. Sometimes they even put families in to make it look even more normal.

Rented properties were the preferred vehicle for many years, but a combination of money laundering and profitability has led to some properties being purchased specifically for growing marijuana. Sometimes the structures are built specially for growing, with features to combat mold, odor and humidity.

They come in all sizes. Small grow ops in a basement closet or huge ones in an industrial size greenhouse - they are everywhere. The largest one reported by police was in Brampton, Ontario, in a de-commissioned brewery. It contained 25,000 plants worth an estimated 30 million dollars. This is not a typical grow op.

While the industry has steadily grown, some parts of the country are more exposed to it than others - specifically BC, Ontario and Quebec. There are regional differences - in Quebec about 40% of the crop is grown indoors while in BC it's more like 70%.

Because there is a lot of money to be made marijuana growing has become widespread. Relatively speaking the risks are quite low. Punishment is negligible. It has, as a result, become a million dollar industry.

According to law enforcement the small growers are being replaced by bigger, organized criminal enterprises. Good returns and low risks make this an attractive activity. Growing demand and acceptance coupled with light penalties means grow ops will be with us for years to come.

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