

# RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

## THE MARIHUANA GROW INITIATIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2012

[WWW.RCMP-GRC.GC.CA](http://WWW.RCMP-GRC.GC.CA)



Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police

Gendarmerie royale  
du Canada

Canada

OUR PARTNERS  
ARE VITAL  
TO THIS STRATEGY.  
THE RCMP  
HAS JOINED  
WITH INDIVIDUALS  
AND ORGANIZATIONS  
TO SPEAK WITH  
ONE VOICE IN  
THE HOPE THAT  
OUR MESSAGE WILL BE  
HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR AND  
ATTENTION WILL BE BROUGHT  
TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES  
SURROUNDING ILLEGAL MGOs.

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# COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

I am excited to present this report focusing on the RCMP's national strategy to combat illegal marihuana grow operations (MGOs) across Canada.

The Marihuana Grow Initiative (MGI) was launched in September 2011 to serve as a strategy that would address the individual and community health and safety concerns that come into play when illegal MGOs are present in our neighborhoods. Shortly after the MGI was launched, we created a page on the RCMP's public website where we publish the addresses of clandestine drug laboratories and marihuana grow operations that have been searched and dismantled by the RCMP. Since the introduction of the public website, there have been in excess of 300 addresses posted.

In the first year of this strategy, we have collectively set out to make an immediate and lasting impact against illegal MGOs and the organized crime groups operating them. The production, trafficking and exportation of marihuana finance the illicit activities of organized crime. This has an impact on all of us.

Under the three principle pillars of this strategy (Awareness, Deterrence and Enforcement) and with heightened community engagement, *I am confident that we are heading in the right direction, with early measures of the strategy showing great promise.*

I am also confident that, as you read this year's annual review, you will conclude the RCMP and its many partners are making a positive difference in improving our community's collective well-being. As we move forward in 2012 and into 2013, Canadians can count on seeing continued awareness campaigns focusing on the harm done by illegal MGOs, as well as sustained enforcement pressure against organized crime groups involved in the production of marihuana.

**BOB PAULSON**  
**COMMISSIONER**



## THE MARIHUANA GROW INITIATIVE (MGI): YEAR I

Marihuana grow operations are the staple of the organized crime economy. They generate a financial base for operating other illicit ventures that in turn breed more criminal activities. In response to this problem, the RCMP launched the MGI last September (2011), an initiative based on three pillars: Awareness, Deterrence and Enforcement. For the MGI to be effective and successful, collaboration among government agencies, community groups, businesses and members of our respective communities is essential. When assessing an initiative, one often relies on statistics to support or counter a statement or a result. But numbers can be manipulated. What really matters is the effect the initiative is having on communities. We need to concern ourselves with the way in which our partners view the MGI's success and how we might collectively better address the challenges that surround illegal MGOs.



## SO, WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY THINK?

Awareness is one of the MGI's pillars. This means we are always looking for opportunities to share what we know with the community and to help raise awareness of how organized crime is eroding our right to live in safe and secure communities. Awareness is also about engaging other stakeholders and working with them to address the community's challenges.

- 4 In asking for feedback, we've heard that grow ops continue to be a major concern for homebuyers and REALTORS® across the country. Both groups are often unsure whether houses listed for sale have previously been used for grow ops.

The RCMP shares this concern. We have dealt with it in part by publicly listing addresses on our website where the RCMP, under the authority of a search warrant, has dismantled illegal MGOs or clandestine drug labs:

[www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/drugs-drogues/mgi-ircm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/drugs-drogues/mgi-ircm).

MGOs and clandestine drug labs harm communities. They are established in homes or outbuildings in residential, rural and commercial/industrial areas. Wherever they exist, they create an increased risk of criminal activity and serious, sometimes irreparable, damage to personal property.

The MGI web site has been a great success. So far, it has received more than 400,000 visits, has been referenced by more than 300 separate sources, has obtained significant national news coverage and has been featured on and linked to by many social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

In response to the RCMP's MGI web site and the posting of criminal addresses, Canadians have responded positively via the RCMP webmail account: *"...this is a great resource for the public to be informed of potentially dangerous houses and buildings in their community. Keep up the good work. " ...as well as "...work well done. Now I feel my tax dollars are being well used...please keep up the list and keep us better informed so we can keep a watch in our own neighbourhoods."*



“...this is a great resource for the public to be informed of potentially dangerous houses and buildings in their community. Keep up the good work.”

Establishing this web site is only a small part of what the RCMP has done to create awareness. Did you know the MGI is focused on a comprehensive effort to engage all of Canada's communities in reducing the presence of illegal MGOs across the country? We've also been holding town hall meetings with community members just like you, looking for solutions to the illegal MGO problem. We need your input.

6 Community challenges like MGOs and clandestine drug labs call for a community response. For reasons such as the one highlighted in the following comment from a member of the public, we're working hard to address this concern: *"Can you please provide me with information that gives a substantive link, preferably evidence based, on how the list deters those individuals/groups from continuing to run grow ops? The only result I would expect is neighbours seeing a drop in their house prices."*

The problem isn't just about diminishing property values -- what about rising insurance premiums? What about our health? Did you know that property insurance is not designed to cover the destruction and loss caused by illegal MGOs? MGOs are not accidents or random acts of violence, like break-ins or the damage caused by storms. In many cases, illegal MGOs operate using amateur adjustments to hydro wires that pose shock and fire hazards! Chemicals and moulds build up inside grow houses and pose significant

health hazards to anyone who enters. These are real dangers that diminish the community's well-being. With the help of other important stakeholders, this message is getting out.

Deterrence is the MGI's second pillar. In short, it translates to the RCMP working to deter people from illegally producing and trafficking marihuana.


Deterrence is often easier stated than accomplished. It involves amending laws and regulations through due process, which takes a great deal of time and cannot be undertaken without thoughtful reflection. Organized crime groups manipulate laws and regulations, exploiting loop-holes for the sole purpose of making money. Criminals have no consideration for the harm they cause to our communities. They don't give a second thought to the ways in which their actions hurt honest citizens. Deterrence is a logical step for community members who've become aware of the problems posed by MGOs and clan labs. While laws and regulations are one aspect of deterrence, the power of communities banding together is significant in tackling these illegal activities.



This is where we come together and deter others from engaging with organized crime groups, preventing them from establishing illegal MGOs or clan labs. Of course, we are partnered with other federal and governmental agencies in addressing these challenges, but did you know that we are also proudly partnered with organizations such as the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC), the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) and the Canadian Association of Accredited Mortgage Professionals (CAAMP) to name a few? We are and we rely heavily on their expertise to help address the challenges associated with illegal MGOs.

We also facilitated the creation of a new body called the National Council Against Marihuana Grow Operations and Clandestine Laboratories that held its first meeting in November 2012. It is a coalition of community, industry and government groups that will share best practices on increasing public awareness about the societal hazards of marihuana grow operations and clan labs, and advocate for a national approach aimed at helping prevent, detect, and deter such criminal acts.





“...With the volatile mix of chemicals, lights, and unsafe electrical, structural and plumbing modifications, they become a significant risk to health and safety, and can destroy a perfectly good home.”

## HERE'S WHAT SOME OF OUR PARTNERS HAVE TO SAY:

*"Grow ops have become a major concern for homebuyers and REALTORS® across the country. REALTORS® are committed to protecting the interests of our clients and believe that buyers should be able to determine whether a house for sale has housed a grow op in the past. The structural integrity and inhabitability of such houses may be compromised and prospective buyers need to know that costly remediation may be needed to correct health and safety issues."*

**The IBC** *"...shares the concerns of the RCMP and have some clear advice for property owners on how to prevent grow ops from taking root in their homes and buildings."*

**The CCSA** *"...is proud to partner with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in this initiative to reduce the harm caused by marihuana across Canada. As Canada's national agency responsible for addressing the harms of substance abuse, we are a natural partner to support the RCMP in this work."*

*"Combating mortgage fraud has been a CAAMP priority for many years" and "...through the work of the Fraud Sub Committee, recognized that home buyers and their broker partners needed protection from this real estate challenge."*

The third pillar of the MGI is enforcement. This is where the RCMP and its law enforcement partners take direct aim at organized crime and the criminal elements associated with illegal MGOs.

Our communities, especially those affected by illegal MGOs, are well aware of the risks associated with them as demonstrated by the following comment by Acting Fire Commissioner David Schafer: *"...marihuana being grown in our neighborhoods is fueling violence and other criminal activity putting all of us and our families at risk. These MGOs represent a growing threat to the people who create them, live near them, and responders that get called out to them. With the volatile mix of chemicals, lights, and unsafe electrical, structural and plumbing modifications, they become a significant risk to health and safety, and can destroy a perfectly good home."*

We're working hard to get out there and dismantle as many illegal MGOs as we can and the criminal organizations behind them. Many of them are discovered because of hydro theft or fire, but we're also being proactive by identifying illegal MGOs through intelligence and special enforcement operations. As an example of our proactive efforts, the RCMP, in collaboration with local law enforcement partners, organized two major MGO blitzes during the past year in communities in Calgary and Winnipeg. Marihuana production and trafficking



in these areas is no greater than in any of Canada's other major cities, and the results demonstrate that illegal MGOs are indeed a problem for many communities. With public support and tips, and with help from local, provincial and federal agencies, these two blitzes enabled us to dismantle more than 30 illegal MGOs.

Police education is an important component in investigating illegal MGOs. We're continually making efforts to stay on top of our game and to provide the best service possible to the communities we serve. In January 2012, the RCMP launched a new online pilot course entitled "Introduction to Marihuana Grow Operations". This course was developed to strengthen the RCMP's capacity to investigate illegal MGOs. It provides information to front-line investigators on the latest methods for investigating illegal MGOs and the impact they have on the health and safety of first responders, homeowners and surrounding properties. So far, more than 1,000 RCMP employees have taken the course. Given the level of interest, that number is expected to increase during the upcoming year.





## REFLECTIVE THOUGHTS...

The Marihuana Grow Initiative has been a success during its first year and the collaborative work done in our communities is something we can all be very proud of. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. There is much work to be done and challenges continue to emerge. Organized crime has proven over time that it does not give up easily. Criminals will adapt, they will change the way they operate so they can continue profiting from illegal MGOs. The broader community must continue to be engaged so we can meet the challenges that lie before us. Together, we can be successful in reaching our collective goal of providing Canadians with safer and healthier communities.





## DID YOU KNOW?

THE AVERAGE MGO SEIZED BY  
THE RCMP IN 2011 WOULD  
FILL NEARLY HALF THE  
AVERAGE CANADIAN HOME!

[ MGI - RCMP ]



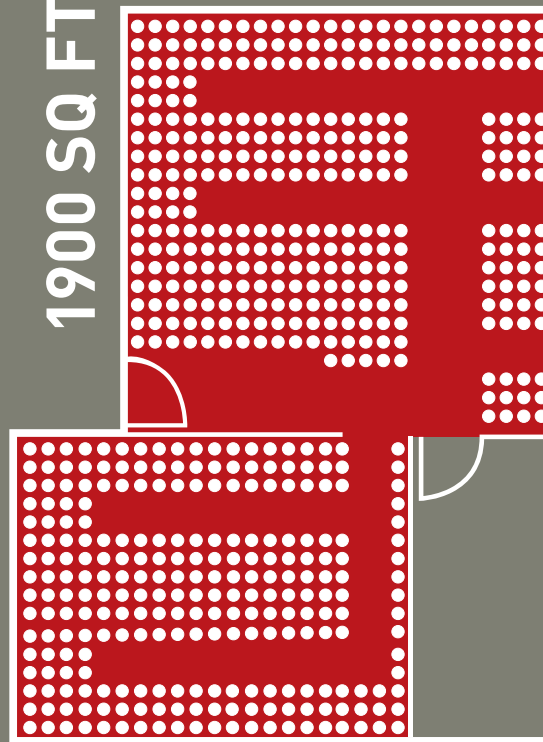
[ 727 ]  
PLANTS

[ SOURCES ]

Canadian Home Builders' Association | [www.chba.ca](http://www.chba.ca)

Royal Canadian Mounted Police | The Marihuana Grow Initiative | [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca)

1900 SQ FT



- MARIHUANNA PLANT APPROX. 1.25 SQ FT
- APPROXIMATELY 908.75 SQ FT