



Government Relations Issues Update

Marijuana Grow Houses

TREB Key Message

Marijuana Grow Houses are a serious concern for REALTORS and their clients, as well as the general public. REALTORS are proactively working to protect the interests of their clients and to assist the efforts of police.

To protect consumers, Municipalities and the Provincial Government should work together to develop a central public registry that provides address information of marijuana grow houses.

Background

Grow houses are dwellings, usually residential, that have been leased or bought by persons in the drug trade and turned into an indoor nursery for the growing of marijuana.

Grow house operations often involve significant alteration to the dwelling structure and electrical system, which can compromise the structural integrity and pose safety and fire hazards. Furthermore, the large amount of moisture required to grow the plants can result in mould growth, which can be hazardous to health.

These operations can also create concerns regarding property value for surrounding properties since they are almost always located in typical residential areas.

Faced with these issues, Toronto-area REALTORS® have proactively taken action to protect their clients and themselves and to help police combat these operations. Efforts include:

- Helping REALTORS® recognize signs that a property may have been used as a grow house;
- Education courses specific to this issue;
- Assisted City of Toronto with establishing action protocol after grow houses are busted.
- Developed clauses that can be inserted into Agreements of Purchase and Sale;

- Requested that OREA make grow house clauses part of the standard Agreements of Purchase and Sale;
- Lobbied federal, provincial, and municipal governments to take action on this issue.

In December, 2005, the provincial government passed Bill 128, *the Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004*. Bill 128 amends various Acts relating to law enforcement matters with the intention of combating marijuana grow operations. One key change that Bill 128 makes is to require municipalities to inspect grow house properties, once they have been shut down by police, and issue work orders to make sure that they are made safe for habitation.

The City of Toronto has taken the lead in developing protocols to implement the Bill 128 requirements for municipal inspections. Specifically, the City of Toronto has a policy to register work orders relating to grow house operation on a property's title.

TREB has also been working to gain access to address information for known grow houses. TREB has communicated the importance of this information for consumer protection to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and to all GTA Mayors and Regional Chairs.

TREB has supported and participated in OREA's lobbying efforts for a provincially run central registry for marijuana grow operations. As a result of these efforts, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services established a stakeholder working group, co-chaired by OREA, to make recommendations on a registry. Recommendations to establish a registry were presented to the Minister in the Spring of 2007 but provincial action is still pending.

Most recently, TREB has worked closely with Toronto Councillor Paul Ainslie with regard to establishing a grow house registry for Toronto. Work continues on this.