

■ **POLICE:** Value of marijuana plants estimated at \$150,000

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Grow op goes up in smoke

BY PETE FISHER

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Northumberland OPP believe a homeowner making illegal drugs was responsible for heavy fire damage to a Cramahe Township home Tuesday.

It's a classic example of the dangers of illegal drugs, police say.

OPP Detective Constable Neil Browne of the Central East Drug Unit said the fire is believed to have started in the garage of the bungalow at 3339 County Rd. 25 east of Castleton around 4 p.m. when the homeowner was making weed oil.

"In some instances during the process of making weed oil, vapours from some of the chemicals used are extremely flammable," he said.

Part of the process deals with using a burner of some type, and this may have led to the blaze.

The homeowner suffered burns to his legs in the fire and was taken by ambulance to Campbellford hospital.

Before being treated for non-life-threatening injuries, the man left the hospital, but was arrested a short time later. He was held for a bail hearing yesterday in Cobourg.

The first firefighters on scene radioed the garage was in flames and the fire was spreading to the attached home.

Additional fire departments were requested from Trent Hills (Warkworth) and Brighton to help shuttle water to the scene.

The blaze spread through the upper area of the home, consuming half of the roof before firefighters managed to quell the flames.

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With the burned out garage behind him, Northumberland OPP Constable Ian Brown removes a number of marijuana plants from a home on County Road 25 in Cramahe Township yesterday. While battling a blaze on Tuesday around 4 p.m., Cramahe Township firefighters discovered what appeared to be an indoor marijuana grow operation in the basement. Police say the fire may have been started when the suspect was cooking weed oil. The house sustained major damage.

PETE FISHER Sun Media

■ **CRAMAHE:** 2.5% lower

Draft budget didn't add up

BY BOB OWEN

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If only it were this easy all the time.

An accounting oversight which has been corrected has reduced the potential 2009 tax increase in Cramahe Township by 2.5%.

When heads of departments handed in their proposals earlier this year, the possible increase was about 12%. After some discussion the heads reduced the increase to about 7%.

On Monday, at the first budget meeting of Cramahe Council, township treasurer Mora Chatterton checked into some administration salary numbers which appeared inexplicably high. By Tuesday, she had the answer: \$109,938 had been entered twice. The correction of the accounting error brought the possible tax increase down to about 4.5%.

Further discussion on Tuesday has resulted in cuts to advertising, custodial services at the Castleton Town Hall and to proposed health and life insurance for elected members.

Council also agreed, at Mayor Marc Coombs' suggestion, not to use estimates for gas, fuel and hydro for this year. The township will use the actual costs from 2008 which are lower. The treasurer

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