

Police, Hydro team up to battle marijuana grow houses

Halton Crime Stoppers and Halton Hills Hydro have joined forces to combat illegal marijuana grow houses.

This year Halton Hills Hydro along with Burlington, Oakville and Milton Hydro companies began distributing information brochures, which were attached to residents' hydro bills.

The brochures, funded through donations by regional hydro companies, were produced to educate homeowners of the dangers associated with illegal grow operations and to provide Halton residents with tips on how to spot potential signs of an illegal grow house.

"Last year alone, our unit conducted 14 warrants on illegal grow operations with the seizure of 2,155 plants," said Halton Regional Police Service

Drug and Morality Bureau spokesperson Staff Sgt. Bob Waller. "This represents an increase of 100 per cent over 2005. In addition to the drain on police resources this type of work can also be very dangerous to those officers participating in the execution of the warrant due to the high potential of booby traps that may be present."

He added many of the grow operations that go undetected will become a public health hazard to unsuspecting home purchasers.

"As a drug investigator, Crime Stoppers is a valued partner in deterring and identifying illegal grow operations," said Waller.

Halton Crime Stoppers Police Coordinator Detective Gary Gold said grow houses have many serious nega-

tive consequences "that may not be immediately recognized."

"Consequences such as fire, electrocution, organized crime involvement and violence may all increase as the result of illegal grow operations. Neighbourhood property values may also decrease as a result of damage caused by an illegal grow house," said Gold.

He said homeowners reluctant to give information directly to the police, can contact Crime Stoppers (1-800-222-TIPS) which offers individuals complete anonymity when they pass along information.

"That information is then forwarded to the police for further investigation. Tipsters will never be asked for a statement or to testify in court," said Gold.

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