

The discovery of a major marijuana-growing operation in the Mohawk community of Kanestatake has key authorities passing responsibility like a hot potato.

Some Kanestatake Mohawks want Ottawa to take action. But federal authorities say it's a local enforcement issue for the Quebec provincial police.



A Mohawk marijuana grower holds a fistful of cured Kanestatake-grown pot along with a live plant in a field of about 1,000 plants.

CP Photo

Marijuana cultivation in the Kanestatake Mohawk community has grown tenfold in a year, say two men who allowed The Canadian Press to visit one of their fields.

The two, who agreed to be interviewed under strict anonymity, have a total of 1,000 plants. They say that's the general number of plants cultivated by many community members — as much as 50 per cent of residents, they said — in backyard gardens or empty fields.

"It's too labor-intensive otherwise," one laughed.

Some "greedy" people have as many as 10,000 plants which are patrolled by guards armed with AK-47s and automatic M-16 rifles, they said.

But they laughed off news reports that one million marijuana plants are awaiting harvest in the community, saying the number is 100,000 at the most.

The crop is an individual initiative, they said, denying reports of involvement by biker gangs and the militant Warrior Society.

They also said a small handful of members of the band council are involved "up to their gills" in the pot cultivation but that Grand Chief Jerry Peltier "is in the dark" about it.

The marijuana fetches \$5,500 a kilogram in Montreal and about \$3,700 a kilogram in Toronto. It's also destined for New York City, passing through the Akwesasne reserve that straddles Quebec, On-

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