

STAFF PHOTOS/ROB ALARY

In protective body suits, York Regional Police morality officers spent several hours Thursday clearing 155 mature plants from a home on Carrville Road near Yonge Street in Richmond Hill. Growing components such as reflectors, ventilation fans, timers and watering devices (inset) were also seized from the house.

Home-based marijuana operation busted

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

York Regional Police busted a \$100,000 pot-growing operation in Richmond Hill.

Officers seized 155 marijuana plants from a house on Carrville Road, just west of Yonge Street, Thursday afternoon.

Det. Const. Bryan Shea, of the drug and vice unit, said the operation filled most of the house and relied on many pieces of equipment.

"The whole basement was converted to a hydroponics growing operation," he said, adding two rooms on the second floor also contained marijuana plants.

The plants flourished with the help of lamps and ballasts,

electrical components that boost wattage and diffuse light through shades.

The whole basement was converted to a hydroponics growing operation.

Det. Const. Bryan Shea
drug and vice unit

"They simulate the outdoor environment indoors," Shea explained. "It's like an indoor grow thing for tomatoes. The plants are nurtured and cared for."

One piece of equipment diverted the huge amounts of electricity needed for the operation from the home's hydro meter

Investigators said someone occasionally entered the home to give the impression it was occupied and to check on the plants.

Shea said police discovered the operation after a 911 call.

Narcotics operators rely on a potentially explosive mix of chemicals. Officers at the scene wore protective suits to guard against risk of contamination. They sifted through dozens of items including eight large fans that stood outside the home's two open garages.

A hydro crew took care of live wires and other hazards.

Shea, who noted hydroponics operations pose a direct threat to the safety of neighbourhoods, would not say whether charges are pending in the matter.

Pot regulations garbage: advocate

Stricter guidelines for legal marijuana use introduced

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

New medical marijuana regulations being introduced this month are another insincere ploy by the federal government to convince voters it has the best interests of Canadians at heart, a frustrated Bradford pot advocate says.

Stephen VanDeKemp, one of 200 Canadians legally permitted to smoke marijuana, is so disillusioned with the regulations, which come into effect July 30, he is considering ripping up his permission papers as a protest.



STEPHEN VANDEKEMP: Operator of illegal compassion club supplying marijuana to the ill thinks new laws too strict.

Hopefully, the judge will look at it and vomit...

"The new regulations are garbage. They're more restrictive (than the previous policy)," he said. "Hopefully, it won't satisfy the courts. Hopefully, the judge will look at it and vomit and say the law is struck down."

Health Minister Allan Rock insists regulations will make it easier for patients to get marijuana, as long as their doctors prescribe the drug.

"Today's announcement is a landmark in our ongoing effort to give Canadians suffering from grave and debilitating illnesses access to marijuana for medicinal purposes," he said in a news release.

Under the new policy, unveiled last week, those who qualify to use pot for medicinal purposes include:

- People expected to die within 12 months, although a doctor has to agree conventional treatments have been exhausted;

- Patients suffering from chronic illnesses such as AIDS and multiple sclerosis. A doctor will have to state traditional treatments are inappropriate;

- Those with serious medical conditions who can't find relief through other methods. Two doctors will have to confirm conventional treatments don't work.

People who grow or possess marijuana for medicinal purposes will carry photo ID cards so they aren't arrested.

VanDeKemp, who is permitted to use marijuana to alleviate his depression, anxiety and mood swings, questioned why the criteria to use the drug is so strict.

He believes the decision should be left to physicians and their

patients.

The regulations will leave legal users of pot scrambling to find a supplier of the drug, VanDeKemp said.

Legal users are permitted to grow their own marijuana, but he argues many are too ill to do so.

VanDeKemp, who operates an illegal compassion club to supply marijuana to the ill, questioned why the government isn't providing users with a safe and accessible source.

"Why is the government making these people go to the local drug dealer?" said VanDeKemp, who was charged with possession and trafficking three years ago. The charges were later dropped when he was given a legal exemption to use marijuana.

Complaining the regulations add more bureaucracy to the lives of seriously ill patients, VanDeKemp said police will search legal users' homes to ensure they are complying with the law.

"The regulations are really dumb, idiotic and time consuming. From a patient's point of view, these regulations are garbage."

VanDeKemp said he will consider destroying documents that allow him to smoke marijuana if new regulations are introduced.

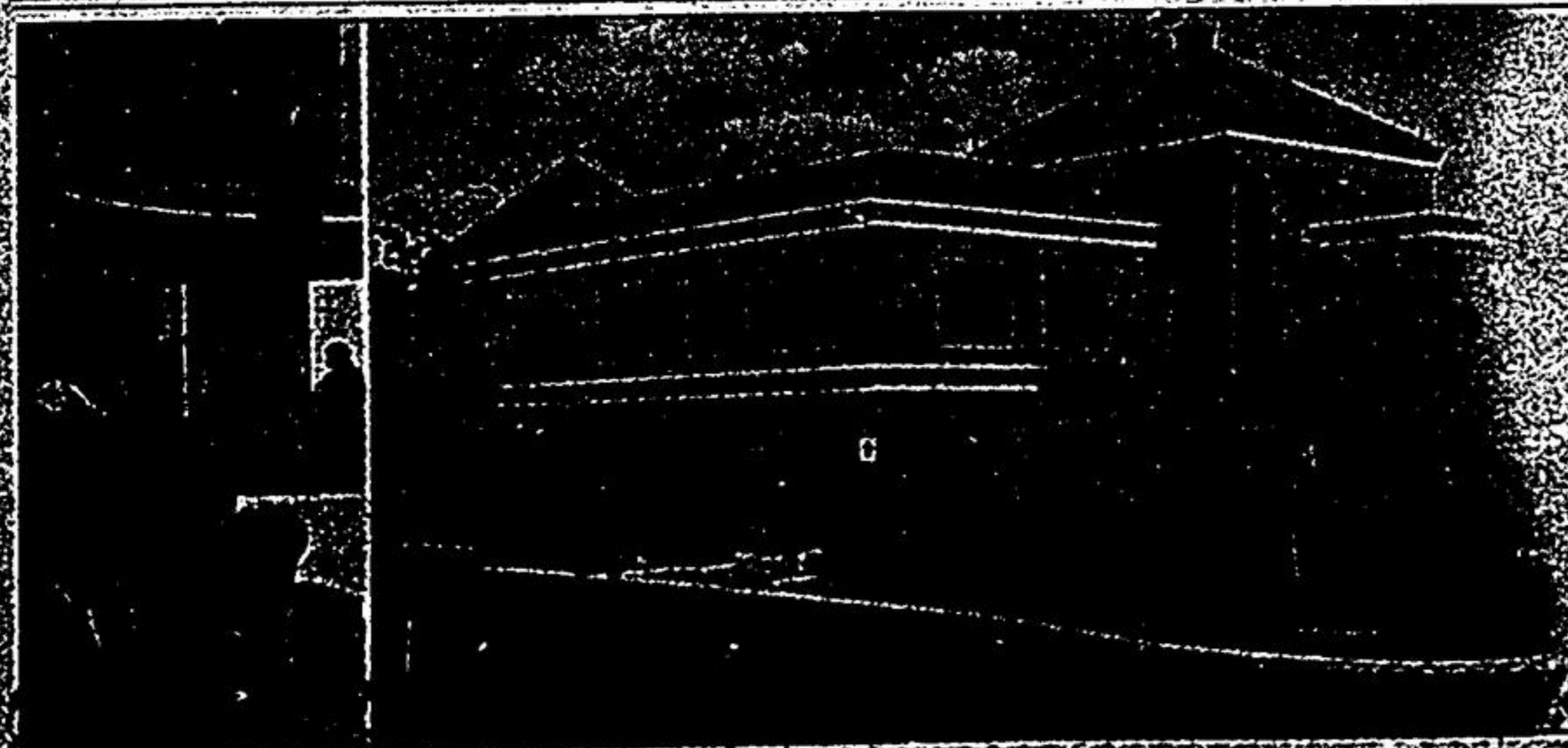
"I will burn them in effigy to show people these regulations are crap," he said.

"I think it's safer underground than being on exemption. We're being taken advantage of by the government and everybody else."

He also complained the burden of reforming marijuana laws is falling on the shoulders of ill Canadians.

"Unfortunately, it's sick people like me who have to stick their nose into it to get changes. It's perverted," he said.

"They (politicians) are too chicken to legalize it."



Chapel Ridge
PUNKIN' AT HOME

8911 Woodbine Avenue
Markham, Ontario L3R 5G1
(3 blocks north of Hwy 7)
(905) 305-8508
E-mail: info@chapelridge.com
www.chapelridge.com
Toll Free: 1-877-889-8808



A caring part of our community.