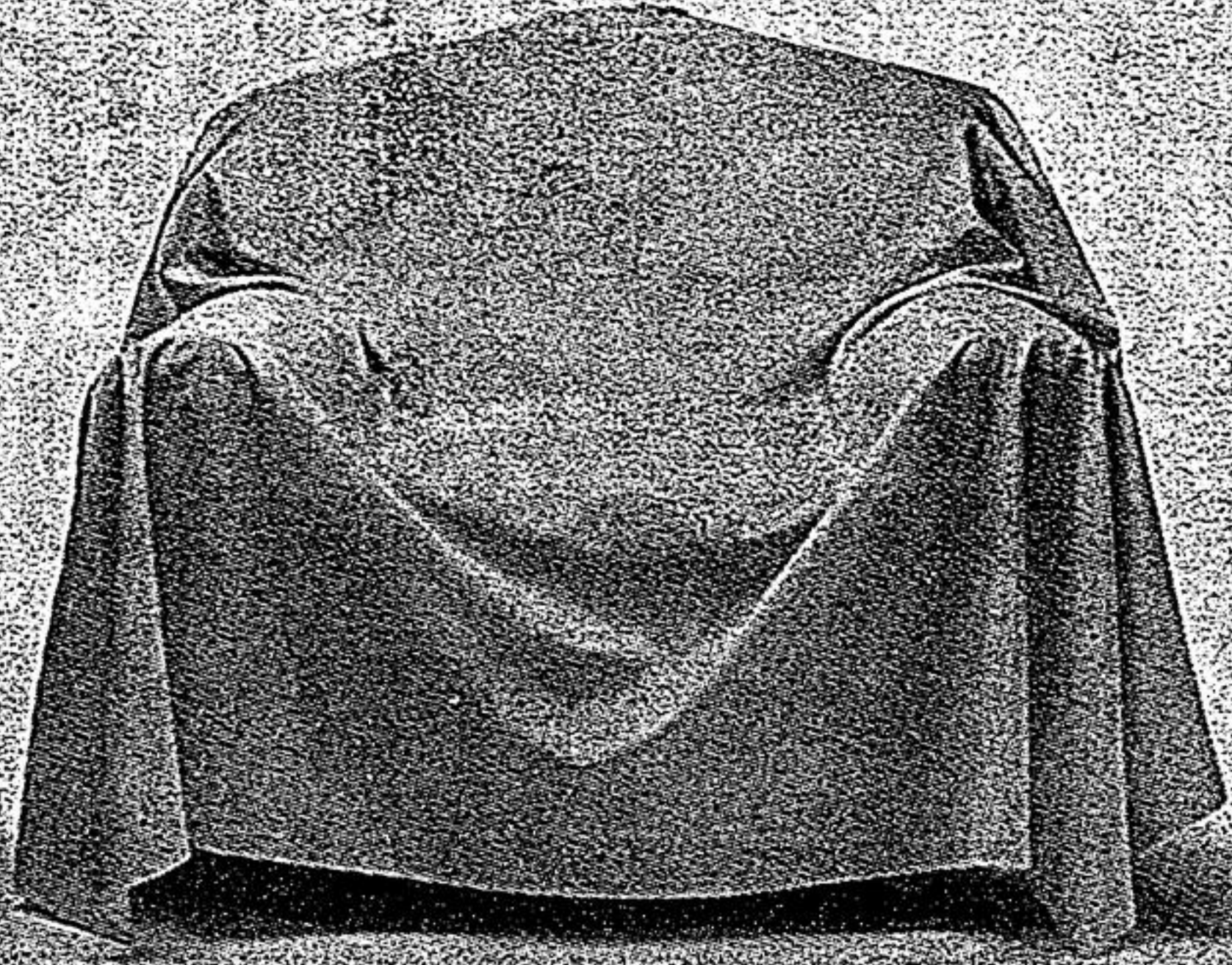


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STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Children on their way home from school Thursday walk by a marijuana grow home operation on Ascot Crescent in Milliken

## Busted pot house near two elementary schools

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE  
Staff Writer

York Regional police raided their 20th marijuana grow operation of 2004 Thursday, found in an un-descript home near two elementary schools.

Detective Darrin Leitch said in addition to 203 marijuana plants with a street value of more than \$200,000, officers found children's clothes, videos and toys, suggesting the growers had children living in the Ascot Crescent home near Birchmount Road and Steeles Avenue.

Det. Leitch also said an extraordinary amount of mould, possibly toxic, was discovered inside the house, caused by the damp conditions necessary for the grow operation.

"One of the officers here has been in more than 170 grows and says he's never seen mould this bad before," he said, adding it filled the entire house including what looked like two bedrooms where the occupants were possibly sleeping. "It's the worse I've ever seen."

Police were tipped off to the

operation's location by an anonymous call, but found no one inside during the raid.

It appears those running the grow-op were also stealing electricity, Det. Leitch added.

The York Region Health Department is expected to inspect the mould and decide if the home should be condemned while the police investigation into who owns or possibly rented the house continues.

Police discovered 173 marijuana grow operations across the region in 2003.

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