



British Columbians need access to information when choosing property to buy or rent, so they are able to make the best decisions for their families and businesses.

Unfortunately, potential property buyers and renters—and the REALTORS® who assist them—currently have no consistent method of learning whether a building has been identified as having been used in drug operations, or whether it has been remediated to a standard that will ensure health and safety risks have been eradicated.

In fact, even identifying the number of drug operations in the province, or any other jurisdiction is a challenge. Anecdotes and research indicate BC has the second-highest number of drug operations in Canada, with up to 18,500 grow-ops and up to 500 drug labs.

The British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA) first brought this issue to the attention of BC MLAs in spring 2012. Since then, BCREA has taken several actions: made a presentation at the 2012 Union of BC Municipalities Convention, participated on the Provincial Marijuana Grow Operations Working Group, through the Ministry of Justice, and commissioned research on disclosure methods.

While no major provincial advancements have been announced in BC, the Government of Alberta has provided significant leadership on this issue. Following months of consultation and examination, the *Grow Op Free Alberta: Final Recommendations Report* was adopted in its entirety in spring 2014. The report contains 37 recommendations that outline actions to address the health, safety and remediation challenges residential grow-ops pose to current inhabitants, future homebuyers and the community, as a whole.

The Alberta initiative reinforces concerns put forward by REALTORS® in BC and across the country. Drug operations, whether licensed or illegal, pose continuing hazards to citizens and communities.



2012 Union of BC Municipalities Convention session led by BCREA

BCREA, its member real estate boards and more than 19,000 BC REALTORS® urge the provincial government to implement the following recommendations in consultation with the real estate sector and local governments. These recommendations are designed to remove the stigma of properties used in drug production, ensure housing stock integrity and provide British Columbians with certainty and peace of mind when choosing properties to buy or rent:

1. **Develop a centralized, consistent process for disclosure of property history information.**
2. **Describe a healthy building and then develop a centralized, consistent process for remediation of buildings used in drug operations.**
3. **Define a “drug operation” in a meaningful way.**

## DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Develop a centralized, consistent process for disclosure of property history information.

A consistent process needs to be developed, in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, to ensure that information about properties used for drug operations and subsequent remediation is available in a timely, straightforward manner.

Disclosure methods take many forms, which is why BCREA commissioned research into this topic. In 2010, the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board developed operational guidelines for municipalities to use when responding to requests for information about specific properties. Simple yes or no answers to straightforward questions give potential occupants enough information to determine whether additional investigations are necessary.

### 2. Describe a healthy building and then develop a centralized, consistent process for remediation of buildings used in drug operations, to ensure these buildings are safe for people.

Knowing what is considered to be a healthy building will give remediation specialists a clear objective, and a consistent process will ideally provide a framework to determine such information as what is required to be tested and remediated, roles and responsibilities and time frames. During the Government of Alberta's consultation process, the most requests received were for air quality standards, and a similar response may be expected in BC.

### 3. Define a "drug operation" in a meaningful way, ensuring that operations with little to no impact on properties are not subject to disproportionate requirements.

At what point is a building damaged by a drug operation to the point that its inhabitants are at risk? This important question must be answered to ensure that disclosure and remediation requirements are applied to those operations that merit the attention. Drug operations occur in all shapes and sizes, with or without the consent and participation of the properties' owners. Disclosure and remediation processes that impose undue hardships could prove to be disincentives for property owners.

## ABOUT BCREA AND THE HOUSING SECTOR

The British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA) is the professional association for more than 19,000 REALTORS® in BC, focusing on provincial issues that impact real estate. Working with the province's 11 real estate boards, BCREA provides continuing professional education, advocacy, economic research and standard forms to help REALTORS® provide value for their clients.

### BCREA member real estate boards:

- BC Northern Real Estate Board
- Chilliwack and District Real Estate Board
- Fraser Valley Real Estate Board
- Kamloops and District Real Estate Association
- Kootenay Real Estate Board
- Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board
- Powell River Sunshine Coast Real Estate Board
- Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver
- South Okanagan Real Estate Board
- Vancouver Island Real Estate Board
- Victoria Real Estate Board

Housing contributes significantly to the economy. A 2013 study by Altus Group Economic Consulting found that the average housing transaction in BC on the Multiple Listing Service® generates about \$64,500 in expenditures.

## CONTACT

Robert Laing, Chief Executive Officer  
604.742.2787 | rlaing@bcrea.bc.ca  
www.bcrea.bc.ca

1420 – 701 Georgia Street W.  
PO Box 10123, Pacific Centre  
Vancouver, BC V7Y 1C6

