

REMEDIATING PROPERTIES USED TO PRODUCE DRUGS

The federal legalization of cannabis has escalated the urgent need for clear policy guidelines on the remediation of homes used to produce drugs. Whether cannabis is grown legally for personal use or the manufacture of illegal street drugs, using homes to produce drugs can have serious negative impacts on the health and safety of future occupants for years to come.

For example, research done by the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health in 2018 raised concerns that, even within the permitted framework of four cannabis plants per household, indoor cultivation and processing of cannabis may introduce or exacerbate health risks in the home. These include:

- indoor air quality hazards,
- pesticides and accidental poisoning,
- electrical and fire hazards, and
- radiation.

There are currently no provincial regulations for how a property should be remediated after it has been used to produce drugs. It is time for the provincial government to harmonize policy and increase consumer protection in BC. The British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA), the 11 real estate boards and more than 23,000 REALTORS® in BC look forward to working with government to address these evolving sector challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a consistent process to remediate buildings used in drug production to ensure they are safe.
2. Ensure that all local governments implement the new uniform remediation policies and practices.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP

As all levels of government adapt to the recent legalization of cannabis, the BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, has the opportunity to assert leadership in the remediation of properties used to produce drugs, starting with a standardized provincial framework.

The policy landscape concerning residential properties used to produce drugs is complex, given the patchwork approach of municipal bylaws as well as multiple health authority jurisdictions. As it stands, there is currently no provincial policy that specifies exactly what is a “property used to produce drugs.” Nor is there standardization

CONTACT

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for inspection and remediation. This creates uncertainty, inconsistency and puts British Columbians at risk.

Last year, research commissioned by BCREA and undertaken by the University of the Fraser Valley proposed a five-step remediation process to facilitate a holistic response to ensuring healthy homes for British Columbians.

STRONGER CONSUMER PROTECTION FOR HEALTHY HOMES

Until government develops a standard remediation process, consumer protection will suffer. In a February 2019 survey, 73 per cent of consumers said they would not choose to live in a home where cannabis was grown, and 66 per cent would not even live in a home if they knew the neighbours grew recreational cannabis. Many mortgage lenders and insurance companies are also hesitant to take on the risk of homes used to produce drugs without the assurances that government standards provide.

