

# Child in protective care after \$3.5M Calgary drug raids

## Alderman wants marijuana houses to be bulldozed

BY SHERRI ZICKEFOOSE AND KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD APRIL 3, 2009

After raiding two more suburban pot houses, seizing drugs worth \$3.5 million and apprehending a child living in one of them, police and city hall are vowing to crack down on homes used as "drug factories."

It's believed two south-end homes busted Wednesday are linked to a third home, in Bridlewood, where investigators found nearly \$2 million in marijuana March 4.

Three people are under arrest and the child is in the care of Alberta Children's Services as a result of this week's busts.

The homes are now sitting empty, deemed unfit for habitation and condemned by Alberta Health Services.

Police are making an application to the province to seize all three houses and a car under the Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Act.

As well, a city alderman wants the fire department to have the authority to demolish abandoned drug houses, arguing it will speed up the process of clearing the unsightly homes from neighbourhoods.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart will ask her council colleagues Monday to increase the fire department's authority to include the ability to remediate or demolish houses that harboured marijuana grow ops or drug labs.

Wednesday's pot house busts serve to underscore the problem of suburban property controlled by criminals.

There are about 150 abandoned houses in the city at the moment, of which about 100 used to be "drug factories," Colley-Urquhart said.

"These houses, once they've been taken down, can sit for a year, two years, sometimes three years," she said. "I'm asking for us, as a council, to delegate the authority to the fire chief to deal with (safety concerns), and if they're not dealt with, bulldoze it down."

Under the Municipal Government Act, the fire department faces fewer restrictions in dealing with the public safety aspect than the police would, she added.

While an empty lot isn't ideal, Colley-Urquhart said residents tell her it would be preferable to a boarded

up home with a chain-link fence around it.

"It's a public safety threat to people who live there,"she said, "and there's a stigma."

Police said the latest busts have cracked an Asian organized crime ring.

Inside a home on Copperfield Common S. E., police found 1,408 marijuana plants worth an estimated \$1.8 million. One man was inside the home.

A simultaneous raid on a home on Somerglen Close S. W. yielded another 1,314 marijuana plants, worth an estimated\$1.7 million.A woman inside was arrested.A man seen leaving the home was arrested at a traffic stop nearby.

This year alone police have seized nearly \$14 million worth of drugs from homes in District 8, the city's deep south.

"We're finding a lot of marijuana at this end of the city,"said Sgt. Steve Kelly of the special duties team.

Kui Wai Yip, 47, Kui Lun Yip, 50, and Shaoyan Tan, 41, all of Calgary, are facing theft and drug charges.

sziCkefoose@tHeHerald.Canwest.Com kguttormson@tHeHerald.Canwest.Com

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald