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Export date: Fri Mar 29 12:19:40 2024 / +0000 GMT

King cannabis grow-op busted

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Police have made a major bust after discovering an illegal marijuana grow op in King.

Investigators with the York Regional Police Organized Crime Bureau ??uns, Gangs and Drug Enforcement Unit executed a search warrant at a cannabis grow operation in King and seized 635 lbs of harvested cannabis and more than 4,000 plants, totalling a street value of $6.5 million.

On July 26, York Regional Police officers were assisting Township of King Bylaw, Region of York Public Health and Township of King Fire and Emergency Services with a safety inspection of a property located at 570 Strawberry Lane, following complaints from the community. During the inspection, a large-scale cannabis grow operation was discovered. Further investigation revealed that there were three Health Canada licences in place that allowed for each licence holder or their designate to grow a total of 875 plants on their behalf for medical purposes.

On July 27, a search warrant was executed on the property, which included a house and 22 greenhouses. It was discovered the number of plants far exceeded the limit permitted by the licences and the cannabis was being grown in an unregulated, illegal and unsafe manner, with no quality control, environmental considerations or security measures. Two men who were maintaining the plants were charged.

?This criminal enterprise was operating well in excess of Health Canada authorizations to grow cannabis for medical purposes,? said Chief Eric Jolliffe.

?Over and above the community safety risks associated to unsafe wiring and the use of chemicals, all too often, police are identifying personal and designated production licence holders that are growing excessive amounts of cannabis under Health Canada authorizations.?

Police charged Samkeo Vanvilay, 43, of Laval, Quebec and Chi Chung Phan, 36, of Montreal,with Possession of Marihuana for the Purpose of Trafficking and Produce Marihuana.

The investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the York Regional Police Guns, Gangs and Drug Enforcement Unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 7817, or call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-tips, leave an anonymous tip online at www.1800222tips.com.