



Reporting and Remediating Properties Used in Drug Operations in BC

Access to information is critical to British Columbians 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.

For several years the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board (FVREB), with support from the British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA), has worked with the seven municipalities in its area to build awareness of the importance of access to information about properties used to produce drugs.

The result of that work is a body of knowledge the provincial government can use to implement BCREA's recommendations, which 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.

BCREA, its member real estate boards and nearly 19,000 BC REALTORS® urge the provincial government to implement the following recommendations, in consultation with the real estate sector and local governments:

1. Develop a centralized, consistent process for disclosure of property history information.
2. Develop a centralized, consistent process for remediation of buildings used in drug operations.
3. Implement these disclosure and remediation processes through existing BC provincial legislation.



During the Union of BC Municipalities Convention in September 2011, delegates representing more than 70 local governments participated in an informal survey conducted by BCREA:

- Nearly 90% said knowing whether a property was used in drug operations was very important to them when choosing a home
- More than 90% expressed support for a centralized, consistent process for disclosing property history information
- More than 80% supported a centralized, consistent process for remediating buildings used in drug operations



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. In 2010, FVREB 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. Develop a centralized, consistent process for remediation of buildings used in drug operations.

A consistent process will ideally provide a framework to determine what needs to be tested and remediated, roles and responsibilities, and time frames. In 2009, the Alberta Real Estate Association published recommendations for remediation standards, which may serve as an excellent starting point for British Columbia.

3. Implement these disclosure and remediation processes through existing BC provincial legislation.

To address municipal boundary issues about information sharing and to avoid unnecessary complexity, disclosure and remediation processes should be directed by the BC government, within the framework provided by existing legislation such as the *BC Building Code*, the *Residential Tenancy Act* and the *Homeowner Protection Act*. A similar approach was used in 2006 to enable BC Hydro to provide power consumption information to municipal governments under the grounds of potentially elevated health and safety risks.



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ABOUT BCREA AND THE HOUSING SECTOR

BCREA represents the following 11 real estate boards and their REALTOR® members on all provincial issues, providing an extensive communications network, standard forms, economic research and analysis, government relations, applied practice courses and continuing professional education.

- 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 2009 study by Altus Group Economic Consulting found that the average housing transaction in BC generates nearly \$60,000 in expenditures, including more than \$9,000 in taxes.

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