

Man tells of drug charge nightmare

Undoing damage will take time, says father of four

Crown admits it has no case against mortgage official

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For 15 years, [redacted] has excelled as a mortgage broker, winning praise for his performance and productivity.

But on Dec. 11, his world was turned upside down. He was met at work by two officers, who arrested and searched him in front of his co-workers, explaining he was being charged with conspiring to produce \$35.5 million worth of marijuana.

York Region police alleged that [redacted] arranged the financing for 22 houses used for marijuana growing operations, targeted through a six-month investigation dubbed Project New Voltage, which led to the arrests of 39 people last month.

[redacted] said he was hauled off to a police station, locked up in a

small room and interrogated.

"They said they had tons of information against me," [redacted] said yesterday. "They were very rude. They threatened that if I didn't say anything, I was going to rot in jail."

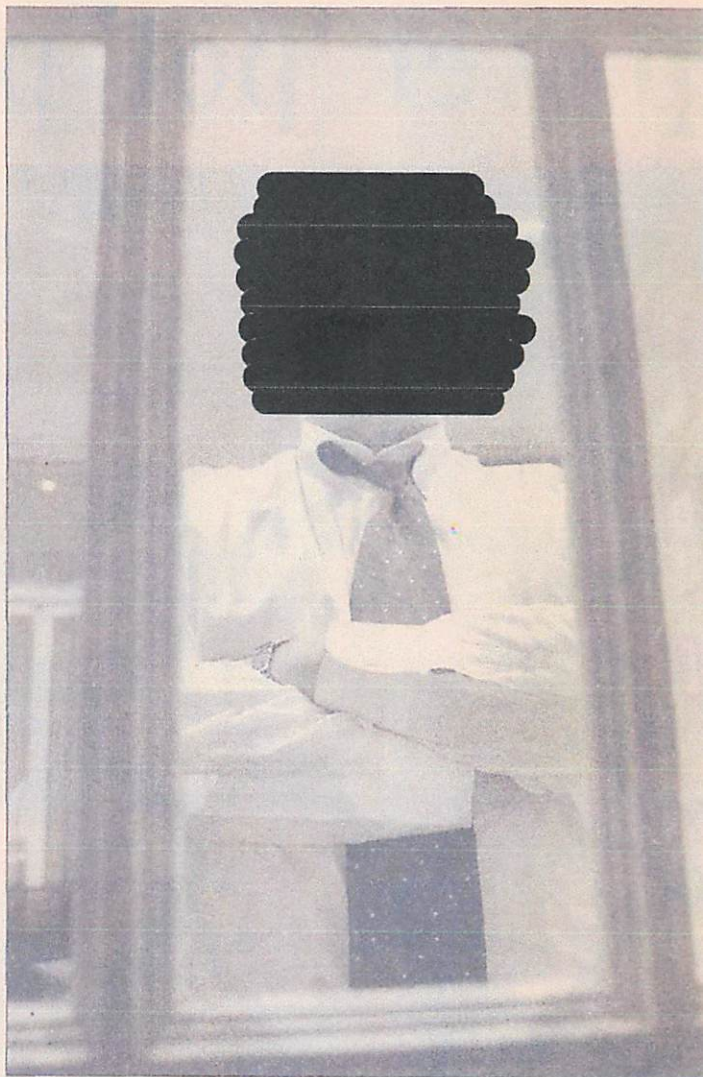
The officer refused to let him contact a lawyer directly, he says. He later got his first taste of prison when he was taken to the Metro West Detention Centre.

The next morning, [redacted] said, he was handcuffed together with eight other inmates and taken to court for a bail hearing, where he was released on a \$50,000 surety.

But yesterday, the prosecution stood up in court and admitted there was no case against the 46-year-old father of four, who had been suspended from his job without pay after being charged.

Adam Boni, [redacted]'s criminal lawyer, said a title search of the houses targeted in the investigation proved his client had no involvement in buying or selling them. Moreover, the mortgages for many of the properties weren't even arranged through his employer, a major financial institution.

[redacted] was immediately rein-



VINCE TALOTTA/TORONTO STAR

[redacted] stands in his home after being freed on conspiracy charges in connection with a York marijuana-growing operation.

stated in his old job and was back at work yesterday. But it could take many years to overcome the devastating repercussions of being charged, he said.

"It's been very hard," [redacted] said in an interview. "It took me 15 years to build up my reputa-

tion; it's going to take a long time to undo the damage."

A spokesperson for York Region police was contacted yesterday for an explanation and told the Star he would find some officers who could respond, but nobody called back.