



ARTICLE

Stay safe from home takeovers

There is a Hungarian proverb that says “A house guest brings good luck.” Unfortunately for some in Ottawa, the opposite is true, and the problem of home takeovers is on the rise. Home takeovers happen when a friend, family member or drug dealer gets invited into a home and then refuses to leave.

Victims are often people who:

- were once homeless themselves
- are lonely
- have a hard time saying no

Vulnerable people, such as single women, persons with developmental disabilities and seniors, are at the greatest risk. As the tenant, you may let someone crash on your couch for a few days, but the unwanted guest stays much longer.

Or, it could be a family member who needs to get back on their feet. The next thing you know, the guests are helping themselves to your phone, your food, your bed. Your house may even be used to sell drugs. The person taking over your home may offer protection, drugs or women for sexual favours to keep you hooked.

It becomes a vicious cycle. If you decide you’ve had enough and ask your guest to leave, you may be met with threats, abuse and violence. You are trapped, afraid to ask for help and miserable in your own home.

No matter who you are or where you live, your home should be your safe place. If a takeover happens in your building, it affects everyone. Takeovers are often accompanied by an increase in break and enters, excess noise and drugs.

If you, your neighbour or someone you know is in danger, speak out. Contact the police, security, or someone you trust.

Do you want to keep your friends and neighbours safe from takeovers? Order Crime Prevention Ottawa’s home takeovers information cards and posters. Visit crimepreventionottawa.ca (under Initiatives, then Neighbourhoods) for details or email cpo@ottawa.ca with your request.