



Financial Crime Trend Bulletin:
Scams Targeting Seniors
2017-06-15

FRAUD: Recognize, Reject, Report

Purpose

June is Seniors' Month, and while this year's theme is "Living the Best Life", many older Canadians continue to fall victim to a number of scams. This fraud bulletin was prepared to outline these scams and provide warning signs that Canadians can use to recognize, reject and report.

Prize Scams

Scammers constantly re-invent the wheel and come up with new ways to prey on potential victims. Older Canadian's continue to receive phone calls, emails or messages through their social media accounts claiming they are the recipient of a large lottery or sweepstakes win. Prior to receiving any winnings, they must first pay a fee upfront. No winnings are ever received.

Scammers will use real company names like "Reader's Digest" and "Publisher's Clearing House" to instill confidence in the victim that the winnings are legitimate.

Warning Signs - How to Protect Yourself:

- Known lottery and sweepstake companies will NEVER request money upfront in order to receive winnings.
- The only method of participating in a foreign lottery is to purchase a ticket, in person, in the country of origin. A ticket cannot be purchased on your behalf.
- Never give out personal information, no matter who the individual claims to represent.

Emergency Scams

Scammers use social media, the internet and direct calls to potentially target older Canadian's with this scam. Potential victims receive a call claiming to be a family member or a close friend describing an urgent situation that requires immediate funds. Common themes have been that the family member was arrested or got into an accident while travelling abroad. Monies are required for hospital expenses, lawyer fees or bail. Usually the potential victim is instructed to send money via a money service business like Western Union or MoneyGram.

Warning Signs - How to Protect Yourself:

- Confirm with other relatives the whereabouts of the family member or friend.
- Police, judges or legal entities will never make urgent request for money.
- Never voluntarily give out family members' names or information to unknown callers.
- Always question urgent requests for money.

Romance Scams

There are a growing number of older Canadian's who are turning to the internet to find companionship and love. Unfortunately, scammers know this and use every type of dating or social networking site available to seek out potential victims.

The scammer will gain the trust of the victim through displays of affection and will communicate via phone, skype and email for months if needed to build trust. The scammer will often claim to be working abroad, usually in a lucrative business venture. Eventually the scammer will want to meet with the victim in person. It is at this time that the scammer will inform they can't afford to travel and will ask for money to cover travel costs. Other variations include the scammer claiming that there is a medical emergency with a sick family member and will ask for money to cover medical expenses.

- Be on the lookout for someone who claims to be from Canada or the U.S. but they are working overseas.
- Be careful communicating with someone who claims to have fallen in love with you quickly.
- Beware if they claim they are coming to visit you but some situation prevents it from happening.
- Don't leave the dating site. The person will usually want to use instant messaging or email.
- Don't cash any cheques or send the person any money for any reason, whatsoever!

If you think you or someone you know has been a victim of fraud, please contact the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501 or report online at <http://www.antifraudcentre.ca>