

Older and Wiser: How to avoid falling for scams.

Thousands fall victim to fraud scams each year, and there's a new one to watch out for
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A new wave of scams are on the rise. Mike Wakefield / North Shore News

Well, another year has rolled by since I last wrote about frauds and scams.

Here we are again in March, the month in which we draw attention to frauds and scams across Canada, and these problems are still negatively impacting people. But there is value in writing about this issue again.

After all, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre says, "education and awareness are the strongest line of defense against fraud".

According to the CAFA there were 41,111 victims of fraud and \$554 million in losses in Canada.

Though people of all ages can be victims of fraud, older people get targeted more than others. In fact, fraud is the number one crime against older Canadians.

Older people may be getting scammed more because they are often seen as easy targets. They are often more trusting, are at home in the daytime to receive calls, may have few relatives or friends to help scrutinize a potential scam, and they may not be as tech savvy as younger people. Apparently though, younger people are getting scammed more often by AI scams, a growing consumer problem.

We are still seeing the usual (but odious) scams Grandparent (fake nephew hitting up granduncle for bail money), Romance (online scam to extort money through a romantic liaison), Service (replacement of roof or furnace by bogus contractor), CRA (money incorrectly said to be owed to Canada Revenue Agency), and Charity (people pretending to collect for a charity, usually at the door).

A new one which has popped up is the Recovery Scam in which someone who has already been scammed is approached by a scammer who say they will recover the loss from the first scam.

In the case of most of these scams there are some tips to block these.

If you are a granduncle, override the scammers message not to call the parent, if you are online with a romantic liaison stop contact when they first ask you for money, do not do business with anyone calling at the door and do not respond to email messages from CRA or banks – they do not conduct business through email.

In general, take these steps to protect yourself. Never tell another person your PIN or account passwords and do not click on pop-up windows or respond to e-mails, open attachments, or go to website links sent by people you do not know.

Never give out your credit card, bank account or personal information to someone over the phone, at the door or over the internet unless you know the person or organization well.

There are times when we are tired, distracted, or unwell and these times may make us more vulnerable to a scammer.

So, stop and think before hitting a link in an email or engaging in a discussion with someone at the door or on the phone.

Do not sign an agreement until you give yourself time to think it over, or better yet run it by a friend or family member.

If you suspect you've been the victim of cybercrime or fraud report it to your local police and to the CAFC's online reporting system or by phone at 1-888-495-8501. If not a victim, report it to the CAFC anyway.

Take seriously the following slogans "buyer beware" and "you don't get something for nothing" and you will increase your chances of avoiding a scam.

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