



COMMUNITY HANDBOOK



FRAUDS AND SCAMS AGAINST SENIORS



The Toronto Police Service is committed to reducing the incidence of Frauds and Scams against seniors

The information contained in this booklet is intended to assist the community and more specifically, seniors and their caregivers in recognizing a fraud or a scam.

If you are a victim, or think you might be a victim, contact your local police station. At the back of this booklet, there is a list of agencies which may assist you with any questions.

If you have been defrauded, you may not necessarily be aware that you are a victim. The con artist will take your money and give you little or nothing in return. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



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HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FRAUD ?



1. A person over the age of 65 is likely to be targeted by a con artist.

TRUE. Seniors are often targeted by con artists for a number of reasons. They often live alone, have more disposable income and generally are more trusting than younger people. A widowed senior living alone is most likely to be targeted.

2. A con artist can only get information about potential victims from illegal sources.

FALSE. Some marketing companies collect and sell information about consumers to legitimate companies as well as con artists. Con artists also get information from product registration cards, government statistics, telephone directories and obituaries.

3. Consumer fraud can only take place over the telephone, or in person.

FALSE. Consumer fraud can take place over the telephone, in person by e-mail or by regular mail.

4. Con artists appear trustworthy, friendly and helpful.

TRUE. The old saying, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar" certainly applies in fraudulent situations. For a fraud to be successful, a con artist must gain the trust of the victim. He/she will be friendly, helpful and appear to have the victim's best interest at heart.

5. Many people who lose money to a con artist fail to report the loss to police.

TRUE. Many people may not report losing money to a con artist because they are embarrassed at having been deceived. Some people think of the con artist as a friend and fail to report him/her out of loyalty. On many occasions, people do not even realize they have been defrauded.

- 6. Always check the identity of a person wanting to enter your house by calling the number they provide.**

FALSE. Too often con artists work in teams. When you call the number provided, you will be speaking to another member of the team who will assure you the con artist is legitimate. Do your own checking first by using the telephone book. If in doubt say NO.

- 7. Con artists are always men.**

FALSE. While many con artists are men, women are equally good at scamming seniors.

- 8. A con artist is unlikely to threaten or use physical violence if you say "No".**

TRUE. While a con artist may pester someone to buy, he/she does not want to be noticed by the police. Physical violence or even the threat of violence, may bring the police. The con artist knows an easier target is just around the corner.

- 9. When a company gives information in writing, a consumer is assured that no fraud will occur.**

FALSE. Anyone with a computer can generate official looking documents designed to convince consumers a company is legitimate. Ask to see a business licence, get references and if in doubt, contact one of the agencies in the back of this booklet.

- 10. To give you time to verify information about a charity, have the caller or person send you the information.**

TRUE. You will want to verify if this charity is registered.

BANK INSPECTOR FRAUD



Hello Mrs. Jones, this is Sergeant Young from the Fraud Squad. We need you to help us with a delicate investigation at your bank. One of the tellers is stealing from customers and we need your help. If you go to the bank and take out \$3,800 and hand it over to one of my officers, we can catch this teller...Please help us, it's your duty.

This conversation is a short version of a Bank Inspector Fraud telephone call. Actual calls to victims sometimes last hours. The intention of the caller is to convince you, he/she is a real police officer or bank employee, and that you must help him/her with an investigation. Once you have gone to the bank and handed your money over, **YOU WILL NEVER SEE THIS PERSON OR YOUR MONEY AGAIN.**

The purpose of this scam is to defraud you of your money. The person on the telephone sounds genuine, however, you can be certain he/she is not a real police officer or bank employee. No police agency or financial institution in North America will ever ask you to participate in such an investigation.

There are many variations of this type of fraud. For example, you may be asked to check the serial numbers on money in your home or in your safety deposit box. The con artist will tell you the money is counterfeit and will ask you to turn it over to him/her. Disconnect the call. Immediately dial *69 on your touch-tone telephone, or 1169 on your rotary telephone. This will give you the information on who just called you. Be sure to write it down.

ALMOST DAILY, SOMEWHERE IN NORTH AMERICA, A SENIOR RECEIVES SUCH A TELEPHONE CALL.

THE CONTENTS OF YOUR SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX ARE PRIVATE. NEVER GIVE THIS INFORMATION OUT TO ANYONE.

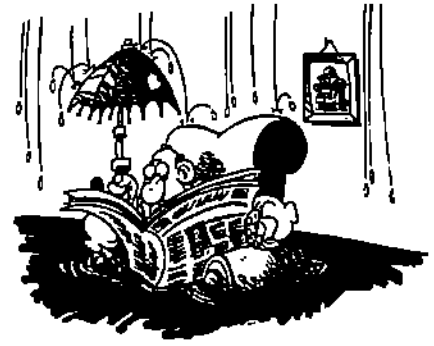
TIPS TO PREVENT BANK INSPECTOR FRAUD

1. **DO NOT** give out financial or personal information over the telephone.
2. Hang up the telephone. Immediately dial *69 on your touch-tone telephone, or 1169 on your rotary telephone. This will give you the information on who just called you. Be sure to write it down.
3. Immediately call your bank manager or someone known to you at your bank and notify him/her of what has happened.
4. Contact your local police and report this incident.

REMEMBER: If you have received this type of telephone call, a serious criminal offence of attempt fraud has been committed. By reporting this attempt fraud to your bank and local police, other seniors will be notified and protected.



HOME RENOVATION FRAUD



Hi...I'm Bob Jones, the owner of Bob Jones Building Products. We are working in the area and can offer you a special deal. We have extra material. I noticed your chimney bricks need work, your driveway needs repair and your roof is in bad condition. This is your lucky day. I'm here to help.

Don't be fooled. This is not your lucky day unless you simply say "**no thanks**" and shut the door.

The purpose of this scam is to defraud you of your money. The person at the door seems genuine and will tell you he/she just happen to be in the area. He/she will also tell you, he/she has a crew of workers and material so he/she can give you a special deal. Con artists will offer any service whether you need it or not. **THE PRICE?** Con artists will say, "Do not worry. We have **special discounts** for seniors." Con artists charge amounts exceeding 3 to 4 times fair market prices.

In other words, a roof job that should cost \$1,500 to \$2,000 may cost unsuspecting seniors anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000. Quite often the work that was done was not needed in the first place. Remember Bob Jones is an expert at convincing seniors they need something that they don't or something at an outrageous cost.

These individuals will appear friendly and knowledgeable. Be assured, their true intention is to convince you to sign a contract and to line their own pockets, while they politely empty yours.

Con artists are successful in Home Renovation Fraud. Seniors frequently need work done on their homes but do not know the costs. Consequently, con artists charge whatever they want.

TIPS TO PREVENT HOME RENOVATION FRAUD



1. Be wary of people arriving at your door claiming to be "In the neighbourhood" offering "Senior's discounts today only". If the deal is good today, it will be good tomorrow.
2. Demand a few days to think about the deal. The law states that if you as the buyer negotiate a contract in a place other than the vendor's permanent place of business, you may cancel that contract by giving written notice to the vendor within ten days of receiving your copy of the contract. Contact your lawyer or the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services for more information.
3. Make sure the senior's discount is legitimate. Find out through other contractors the legitimate price of the work being offered, then you will know if you are getting a discount.
4. Ask questions, and do not always believe the answers.
5. Ask for and check references.
6. Ask for an estimate, call around and get at least two other estimates.
7. Check out the company with the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and ask for assistance.
8. No matter what this person tells you at the door, do not be in a rush. Take your time and be an educated consumer.

PUBLIC UTILITY IMPOSTER SCAM

You receive a knock at your door and are confronted by two men.

Hi Mrs. Jones, we are from the gas company just doing an inspection. We need to inspect your gas service.

Once these two men are in the house, one will have you accompany him to the in-home service location (gas-meter, water-meter or electrical panel usually located in the basement). The other man will ask to use the washroom, the telephone or merely wait upstairs. These men are not utility inspectors. They are thieves searching your house for valuables, medication and information about you.

Quite often when they leave the home, the theft goes undetected for a long period of time. Could you tell if part of your medication or some of the money from your purse was missing?



TIPS TO PREVENT PUBLIC UTILITY IMPOSTOR SCAM

1. Always be especially cautious if there is more than one person at your door.
2. Demand identification at the door. Carefully check the identification and if in doubt **DO NOT** let them in. If they do not have identification, **DO NOT** let them in.
3. Call the public service department of the utility company and confirm the identity of the apparent inspector.
4. Never leave anyone alone in your home. They can use the telephone or washroom somewhere else.



TELEMARKETING SCAMS



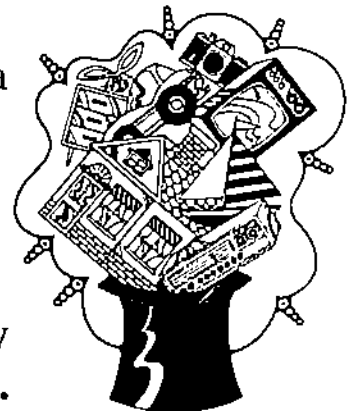
The Most Common Telemarketing Scams

1. **The Lottery Scam:** The caller wants you to be a part of a syndicate or group that is buying a large number of lottery tickets. This will better your chances of winning. These are usually foreign lotteries. They sometimes claim to be able to decrease the odds from millions to one down to as low as six to one, making you almost a sure winner.

Response: No matter what the caller says, the odds per ticket remain the same, usually millions to one. Your community benefits only from lotteries based in Ontario. **Do not buy lottery tickets from a telephone solicitation.**

2. **The Prize Scam:** The caller tells you that you have won a valuable prize or prizes but first you must submit a payment to cover such things as taxes, transportation, customer's insurance, legal fees, etc.

Response: When you're a winner, you do not have to pay for your prize. **Do not send them any money in advance.**



- 3. The Advance Fee Loan Scam:** This scam usually starts with an advertisement for an 'easy loan' appearing in a local newspaper. The victim is usually someone whose credit history may prohibit him/her from getting a loan from a bank. The victim calls the number in the advertisement and is told that he/she has been approved for the amount he/she seeks. However, the lending company representative advises the victim that an advance fee is required, usually about 10 % of the amount to be borrowed.

Response: It is illegal in Ontario to ask for an advance fee for a loan. Do not deal with any lender who charges a fee in advance for a loan. Report this scam to the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, Ontario.



- 4. Vacation Scams:** The caller offers incredible savings and sometimes even free travel or accommodation to popular destinations. Certificates are issued in the victim's name representing a reservation.

Response: You do not get something for nothing. If you try to take advantage of this golden opportunity, you will undoubtedly end up paying the original cost of the vacation. Do not buy a vacation through a telephone sales pitch. When travelling, deal with a reputable agent.



5. **Charity Scams:** The caller appears to be soliciting for what is clearly a worthy cause, although you do not recall ever hearing the exact name of the charity before. Many scams are successful because the name of the charity being used in the scam is similar to an easily recognized charity.

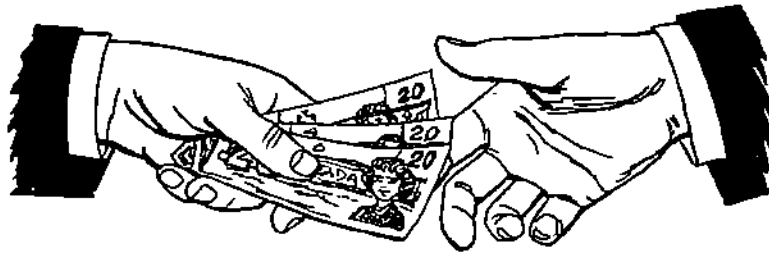
Response: There are so many charities that it is almost impossible to know them all. Do not try. True charitable causes are worthwhile and should be supported. They are frequently listed in the telephone book. Arrange to have your contribution delivered to them directly. Using this approach ensures that your donation goes to the charity you wish to support. Do not send money to an unknown charity.

A GENERAL RULE TO FOLLOW

In the world of fraud prevention and investigation, the two most used phrases are "**Buyer Beware**" and "**You do not get something for nothing**". Commit those phrases to memory and repeat them to yourself whenever you receive any solicitation, particularly when it is by telephone. Do not send any amount of money to someone you have never met until you actually receive what you have been promised.

If you believe you have fallen victim to a Telemarketing scam, call and report the incident to OPP Phonebusters and your local police.

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT FRAUDS AND SCAMS AGAINST SENIORS



1. Do not rush into agreements that involve your property or money. Take your time and ask questions. Get more than one opinion as to the necessity of the work and a written quotation as to the cost.
2. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Avoid 'get rich quick' schemes.
3. Be careful when signing contracts. It may be appropriate to have a family member, friend or legal representative review it first.
4. Read the fine print and if you do not understand, **ASK.**
5. Report suspicious offers to the police immediately, before the suspect finds other victims. Casually take note of what he/she looks like and any vehicle being driven.
6. Never turn over large amounts of cash to anyone, no matter how good the deal sounds.
7. Be extremely careful about giving your credit card number over the telephone.

The most important piece of advice is get help if you do not understand what is happening. Call a family member, friend, trusted neighbour, legal representative or financial advisor.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY



One way to protect yourself and your assets is through the use of a Power of Attorney. A Power of Attorney is a legal document which empowers a person or persons of your choice to act on your behalf for financial or personal care decisions.

You may give a Power of Attorney for Property if you want someone to help you manage your finances. A Continuing Power of Attorney for Property allows your attorney to go on acting for you if you become mentally incapable of managing your property.

The naming of an attorney in a Power of Attorney document is important and should be of your choosing. It can be a relative, a friend or a professional you trust. The person you have appointed is required to act in your best interest and should keep an accurate account of money transactions.

A Power of Attorney for Personal Care enables your attorney to make personal care decisions such as health care, personal hygiene, nutrition, shelter, clothing and safety. It only takes effect if you become incapable of making some or all of these decisions.

The Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee has produced a Powers of Attorney Kit that can assist you in appointing someone to make these decisions. Other Powers of Attorney Kits are also commercially available. You may also wish to contact a lawyer of your own choosing to assist you when completing these documents.

WILLS



A Will is one of the most important documents you will ever write. It is your opportunity to record your wishes for the dispersal of your property in the event of your death. If your children are minors, you may stipulate in your will, who you wish to be their guardian. You can also record your wishes for your pet. A potential guardian should be asked beforehand if they are willing to take on the responsibility for children or pets.

It is best to use the services of a lawyer of your own choosing when making out a Will. You cannot be forced to sign a Will.

If you have been forced or coerced into signing a Will or any other document, contact the police or the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly is a community legal clinic that provides free legal services to low income seniors in Toronto. These telephone numbers are provided at the end of this booklet.

REMEMBER, ALL DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE READ AND UNDERSTOOD BEFORE YOU SIGN THEM.

LIST OF AGENCIES

Toronto Police Service - Emergency	9-1-1
Toronto Police Service Non - Emergency	416-808-2222
Project Senior - Toronto Police Service	416-808-7319
Fraud Squad - Toronto Police Service	416-808-7300
Senior Crime Stoppers	416-222-TIPS, 416-222-8477
Elder Abuse Co-ordinator Toronto Police Service	416-808-7040
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (Legal Aid for Seniors)	416-598-2656
The Public Guardian and Trustee	416-314-2800
Ministry of Consumer and Business Services	(416) 326-8555
OPP Phonebusters	1-888-495-8501

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