



CANADIAN ANTI-FRAUD CENTRE BULLETIN

The 12 Scams of the Holidays

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FRAUD: RECOGNIZE, REJECT, REPORT

The spirit of the holidays is a time of giving for most but, for scammers, it is a time of taking. The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) highlights the most popular holiday scams so that you can recognize, reject, report and be merry.

The 12 scams of the holidays:

- 1) Counterfeit Merchandise** – Look out for huge and flashy discount ads that direct you to websites that look like legitimate manufacturers. If you do receive any inferior/counterfeit products, they could pose significant health risks.
- 2) Selling Goods & Services Online** – Be suspicious of customers offering to pay more than the asking price. When selling goods and services online, always confirm that you have received a legitimate payment before you send the product. Fraudsters will also target anyone selling a vehicle online; make sure to use reputable websites if a vehicle history report is required.
- 3.) Crypto Investments** - Fraudsters are using social media and fraudulent websites to promote fraudulent crypto investment opportunities. Prior to investing, always ask for information on the investment. Research the team behind the offering and analyze the feasibility of the project. Verify if the company is registered by using the National Registration Tool (www.aretheyregistered.ca).
- 4.) Romance Scams** – An attractive fake identity lures you into a web of lies spun with loving messages and sweet promises. The fraudsters play on your emotions to get you to send them money for various, convincing reasons. Never send money to someone you have never met!
- 5.) Online Shopping** – Fraudsters pose as genuine sellers and post fake ads for items that do not exist. The listing price for almost any item (e.g. event ticket, rental, vehicle, puppy) is usually too good to be true. Research before you buy. Whenever possible, exchange goods in person or use your credit card for payment.
- 6.) Cellphone and Internet Service Provider Scam** – If you are looking to purchase a new cellphone this holiday season, don't fall for an incoming call claiming to be from your service provider. Always find the official phone number for your service provider and make the outgoing call.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada



Competition Bureau
Canada

Bureau de la concurrence
Canada



Ontario Provincial Police

Canada

- 7.) Secret Santa** – You may have noticed multiple gift exchange posts on your social media feeds. This may seem like a fun activity where you only have to send one gift and receive multiples in return. Unfortunately, this exchange collects some of your personal information and also hides a pyramid scheme where only those on the top profit. Pyramid schemes are illegal in Canada. To keep it safe, keep the exchanges to close friends and family and conduct them in person.
- 8.) Prize Notifications** – You may receive a letter or a call with the good news: “You’ve won millions and a car too! First, you just need to confirm your personal information and then cover a few fees before your winnings can be delivered.” Remember: If you didn’t enter a contest or raffle, you can’t win. You also can’t enter another country’s lottery without purchasing a ticket from within that country. In Canada, if there are fees associated to a prize, they are removed from the total winnings; you would never be required to pay fees in advance.
- 9.) Emergency** – Is a supposed loved one reaching out to you because they need money now and you’re the only one they trust to keep it a secret? Resist the urge to act immediately and verify the person’s identity by making the outgoing call you have listed for them in your contact list.
- 10.) Gift Cards** – Gift cards are a popular and convenient way to give a gift. They should also be considered like cash; once they are exchanged, it is unlikely that you are getting your money back. Gift cards are not meant for payments and no legitimate business or organization will request these as payments; especially under pressure.
- 11.) Charity Scams** – During the season of giving, make sure your donations are going to the right places. Charity/donation scams involve any false, deceptive, misleading or fraudulent solicitation for a donation to a charity, association, federation or religious cause. Refuse high pressure requests for donations, ask for written information about the charity and do your own research. Remember to always ask the solicitor for the charitable tax number and confirm their registration with the [Canada Revenue Agency](#) or by phone at 1-800-267-2384.
- 12.) Identity Theft and Identity Fraud** – In all the hustle and bustle of the season,

DO: keep your wallet on your person and cover your PIN;

DON'T: share passwords or provide your personal information on impulse.

Fraudsters love a good shopping spree; especially when they’re using someone else’s name and money. Contact your financial institutions and credit bureaus, Equifax Canada and TransUnion Canada, as soon as you notice:

- a. Suspicious activity on your financial statement/s.
- b. Unauthorized activity on your credit report.
- c. Letters approving or declining credit applications you did not authorize.
- d. Re-routed mail.
- e. Bills from service providers you do not use.
- f. Your information was compromised as part of a database breach.

g. [What to do if you're a victim.](#)

Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of cybercrime or fraud should report it to their 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.