

CRIMINALS PREY ON YOUR FEAR DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

Protect Yourself From COVID-19 Related Scams

(ORILLIA, ON) - Members of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Anti-Rackets Branch and the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) (CAFC) say COVID-19 related scams are ploys to extort money and personal information from fearful, trusting victims.

As COVID-19 continues to spread across Ontario and Canada, fraudsters are taking advantage of citizens' fear during uncertain times. Fraudsters are exploiting this pandemic to facilitate fraud through cybercrime and any other means to obtain your information.

Police are seeing various scenarios but most are the typical urgency and time sensitive circumstances that criminals place on individuals in order to receive personal and financial information. Many of the reports have a medically related theme in order to instantly set further anxiety in order to gain information. From spoofed government, healthcare or research companies to unsolicited calls, emails and texts giving medical advice or requesting urgent personal information, scammers are looking at gaining information about you during these times.

According to information received by the CAFC, some of the more popular scams are:

- Cleaning or heating companies - offering duct cleaning services or air filters to protect from COVID-19
- Local and provincial hydro/electrical power companies - threatening to disconnect your power for non-payment
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization - offering fake lists for sale of COVID-19 infected people in your neighbourhood
- Public Health Agency of Canada - giving false results saying you have been tested positive for COVID-19 tricking you into confirming your health card and credit card numbers for a prescription
- Red Cross and other known charities - offering free medical products (e.g. masks) for a donation
- Government departments - sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails tricking you into opening malicious attachments tricking you to reveal sensitive personal and financial details
- Financial advisors - pressuring people to invest in hot new stocks related to the disease offering financial aid and/or loans to help you get through the shut downs
- Private companies offering fast COVID-19 tests for sale - only health care providers can perform the tests, no other tests are genuine or guaranteed to provide accurate results selling fraudulent products that claim to treat or prevent the disease
- Unapproved drugs threaten public health and violate federal laws

TIPS

If you were using your computer when you were scammed, it's possible a virus or malicious software was installed on your computer. Run a full system check using

reliable security software. If you do not have security software such as virus scanners and a firewall installed on your computer, a trusted computer professional can help you choose what you need. Scammers may have also gained access to your online passwords or other personal information. Change these using a secure computer. If you paid someone by credit card or through an electronic funds transfer, contact your financial institution or credit card company immediately. They may be able to stop or reverse the transaction.

Learn more from trusted resources and advice

- Refer to [Government of Canada COVID-19](#) health, financial and security resources
- Refer to [Financial Consumer Agency of Canada COVID-19](#) information
- Reference the latest health information from these legitimate sources:
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#) (Public Health Agency of Canada)
- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) (World Health Organization)
- Contact your insurance provider to answer any health insurance benefits questions

If you or someone you know suspect they've been a victim of a COVID 19 related scam or any other scam, contact your local police service. You can [file a complaint through the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre website](#) or by phone at 1-888-495-8501.

"Recognize, Reject and [Report Fraud](#)"

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