

## Police hold virtual session to teach residents about frauds and scams

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Caledon Ontario Provincial Police's (OPP) Serious Fraud Office presented an information session last week for members of the Caledon community about different kinds of frauds and scams.

Members of the public attended the virtual event with guest speakers including OPP Constables Erin Fraser and Lisa Cruz from the Serious Fraud Office, as well as Jeff Thomson who spoke on behalf of the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.

The online event was hosted by Iryna Nebogatova, Community Safety Officer at Caledon OPP Detachment.

"Fraud can happen to anyone. There's no shame if you become a victim," said Constable Cruz. "Tell others about your situation to prevent them from becoming a victim, but it'll also help you to overcome the situation as well."

The presentation included a variety of stories of people who have become victims of fraud and/or scams to introduce different types of scams that people become victimized to.

Some of these include romance scams, government and CRA scams, identity theft, emergency scams, merchandise scams, and most recently, COVID-19 scams.

Individuals phone, email and even text another person posing as someone in need, including family members or friends, requesting money for assistance of some sort.

"Fraudsters capitalize on situations where people are most vulnerable, such as the current pandemic. It's on top of everyone's mind and they're using that to their advantage," explained Cruz.

A common scam that impacts Canadians are text messages or phone calls stating they are from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).

"Typically, is a robot-call or a voicemail you'll get, and somebody is portraying to be from the CRA and what happens is they're letting you know that you're actually behind on taxes or you need to pay those taxes right away," Cruz explained. "Be mindful not to get on the phone with those scammers and don't call the number back."

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC), which is run by the OPP as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), shared a series of statistics of how much fraud and scams has impacted Canadians.

They reported that the CAFC received a total of over 47,000 reports of fraud that totally a loss of \$104 million in Canada.

Specifically, in Ontario, the CAFC received over 19,000 fraud reports with \$41 million reported in dollar loss.

"Almost half of the Canadian losses come from Ontario," stated Thomson from CAFC. "If you're a victim of crime, you're a victim of fraud, report it to your local police. You can also report to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre."

Several of these scams are reported here in Caledon with similar numbers showing this year, compared to last.

"The number of fraud reports that our officers have responded to are very similar to 2019. Starting March 1, 2019, to December 10,

2019, we've had approximately 150 reports of frauds, and it's similar to this year," said Iryna Nebogatova. "Two other scams are the COVID puppies or kitten scams, as well as cottage rental scams, where people are trying to get away from the city."

One local report came from a resident in Caledon who said that a person had gotten a hold of her personal information and was posting ads online for puppies. Individuals paid full price to the unknown suspect, and unfortunately, received no puppy.

"It's very emotional for people," said Nebogatova.

To learn more about different scams and how to prevent them, please visit the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501, or [Ontario.ca](#).