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Red Deer RCMP warn public about sweepstakes scam

A new scam is surfacing in Red Deer, another variation on the usual intrusive phone call from a pushy, quick-talking person who's trying to part you from your money.

This time, the scammers are claiming to be from Publisher's Clearing House. In a recent Red Deer file, the scammer said his intended victim had won \$7,000 a month for life, but that he needed to wire \$2,000 in order to claim the prize. Fortunately, a family member intervened and educated the intended victim before it was too late.

Publisher's Clearing House does legitimately exist, and they do award prizes in a similar manner to what the scammer claimed. The catch, of course, is that no legitimate organization will ever require the "winner" to send money in order to claim a prize.

"We cannot stress this enough – never send money or share your personal information based on a phone call, without verifying the caller's claims, regardless of who they say they represent," says Constable Derek Turner of the Red Deer RCMP. "Scammers change the names and the details, but the pattern is always the same – they apply pressure to get you to send money immediately. Stop and ask questions. Better yet, just hang up on these predators. Legitimate businesses and agencies don't operate in this way."

Scammers prey on those they consider vulnerable, and RCMP urge everyone to look at their lives, and identify the people they know who might be fooled by scammers. Then sit down and talk to them. Give them the tools to say no to high pressure tactics. Explain the different types of scams that occur (for a comprehensive list see www.antifraudcentre.ca). Encourage them to demand their right to think about every offer and check its veracity before they commit to anything.

Scam facts you need to know:

- No legitimate government agency or business will demand payment in gift cards or prepaid credit cards. Only scammers use this untraceable payment method.

- No legitimate sweepstakes or prize ever requires you to send money in order to claim a prize – that includes border fees, legal fees, taxes or any other fees.
- If you receive a call from someone claiming you owe money, independently verify the information by hanging up, looking up the appropriate agency and calling them directly. Do not call back to a number given out by the person calling you.
- By using “number spoofing,” scammers can make it look like their call is coming from a local number or the number of a business or agency, thus misleading you as to where they are located. As well, some scammers create lookalike direct mail materials or websites that imitate the look and messages of legitimate companies.
- If an offer sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Learn more about scams and how to recognize and protect yourself from them:

www.antifraudcentre.ca.

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