

Red Deer RCMP warn public about Mexican time share scam

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Red Deer RCMP have seen several instances of a newer scam lately – one that targets people who are trying to sell their time shares in Mexico. Scammers approach the seller with promises that they have a buyer, or that they can help the seller to find one. The scammers generally claim to represent a business, and may have a second person call the victim, pretending to be a lawyer for that business. Victims are asked for up-front fees to cover closing costs, taxes, maintenance and other fees. In Mexican time share scams reported in other parts of Canada, the scammers claimed to represent what appeared to be legitimate companies.

In the most recent Red Deer incident, which was reported on April 21, the scammer impersonated an actual lawyer out of the United States. The victim was defrauded of thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, the scam originates in Mexico, and once the victim's money has been transferred out of the country, there is little RCMP can do to pursue the scammers.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre advises sellers of time shares to be suspicious of any organization that:

- contacts you without an invitation, for example by cold calling
- asks you for any kind of up-front payment, for example a deposit or administration fee: a legitimate broker will not cold call you or charge an upfront fee
- says they have a buyer waiting to buy your timeshare
- asks you to send them your Ownership Certificate
- puts a lot of pressure on you to make a decision quickly
- asks for your credit card details but tells you they won't take any payment
- asks for any personal information, for example your bank details or address
- has a 1-900 prefix – legitimate companies will have a 1-800 number

If you are thinking of using the services of a timeshare resale company, check the Better Business Bureau website at www.bbb.org for any complaints that may have been registered against the company. Do not do business with the company if there are grievances filed against it.

Search online to find out more about the company you're dealing with. Timeshare owners who have previously been scammed will often post their experiences and warnings about scammers online.

The best protection from scammers is to learn how to resist being pushed into a decision regardless of how persuasive or aggressive the scammer may be. Arm yourself and the vulnerable people in your life by learning how to recognize and protect yourself from fraud: www.antifraudcentre.ca.

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