

# WHY THE DELAY ON PHONE FRAUD MEASURES?

You know the calls - the ones from people purporting to be from the Canada Revenue Agency, a bank or the like. They say they're collecting on a debt and use fraudulent caller ID to make their call seem legitimate.

Most of us know enough by now to just hang up, but thousands of Canadians have fallen for these scams and been bilked out of millions of dollars over the past few years.

Now Ottawa is requiring telecom companies to crack down on so-called caller ID spoofing by implementing new technology designed to head off these fake calls.

That sounds like very good news, and it is. But before we applaud too loudly we must ask: why is it taking so long for the telecoms and the government to take effective action against this obvious fraud?

The CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission) has announced that telecom companies must put in place a new tool known by the impressive acronym STIR/SHAKEN. It allows service providers to verify caller ID information for Internet Protocol-based voice calls, and let customers know whether they are legitimate.

But there's a sting in the announcement: the companies don't have to do this until the end of next September - almost 10 months from now.

Why the delay? No doubt there are technical issues to deal with, but this is hardly a new problem and the search for ways to tackle it has been going on for quite some time.

In fact, you can go all the way back to July 2015, some four and a half years ago, to find an announcement by the CRTC that it was holding a public consultation to gather ideas to combat ID spoofing.

"Canadians are very frustrated with telemarketers who hide their identity or misappropriate the legitimate numbers of Canadians and businesses," said Jean-Pierre Blais, the agency's chairman at the time. He said the search was on for "new and innovative solutions."

Quite a search. By the time the telecom companies have implemented the STIR/SHAKEN system next Sept. 30, it will have taken five years, two months and a couple of weeks to go from consultation to solution. And even then experts caution that it won't be effective against all spoofed calls, including those that come over land lines.

The scammers, meanwhile, are highly motivated to figure out imaginative ways to get around whatever defensive systems the CRTC and the telecom companies come up with. Who knows what they may come up with next?

The CRTC is right that fake calls are a "major irritant" for Canadians, and it deserves credit for taking action to block as many as possible.

But it and the telecom companies are going to have to step up their game if they want to stay ahead of the fraudsters who are out to pick our pockets over the phone.

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## THINK OUTSIDE BOX TO CUT COST, PLASTIC CLUTTER

BE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY, WRITES STEPHEN ILOTT



STEPHEN ILOTT  
Column

When I declutter family homes I am struck by the avalanche of plastic toys, most of it given cursory love before being crammed beneath the basement stairs.

I hear you saying, "Yeah, yeah, when you were a kid things were different." You bet. When I was a kid my father would hand me a stick and say, "Go and whack a tree. Pretend it's a pirate."

And I would. There was method in his madness. He didn't just hand me my imagination, he conjured it. Think outside of the box

to be both creative and interactive with your family.

Last Christmas my mother asked my brother what his two sons wanted. One wanted a particular dinosaur.

She bought it. It cost \$97. I went another way. I bought the boy five walnuts, put them in a baggie along with a colourful sheet of paper - a cartoon of a pooping dinosaur on top and an actual scientific write-up of the contents of real dino poo below.

I labelled the bag Petrified Dinosaur Poop. It cost me about \$1.50. He played with that, laughing for 20 minutes longer than the soon-to-be hundred dollar plastic doorstop.

For the other brother I found a wooden box and glued a mirror in the box. On the lid I wrote a note saying, "Monkey in the box. Open the lid to see the monkey." It took a minute to get the "Hey!" response

but it was worth it.

I also got them books. Boo Uncle Steve.

One year, for my mother, I created The Leg Weasel.

I connected a funnel to four feet of tubing with a paper clip at the end. I wrote up the pseudoserious instruction package to explain how my mom could use her new pee-anywhere-any-time gadget of the year. I never saw my mother roll on the floor laughing before.

Think outside of the box, repurpose, renew, use humour and create some unique memories of your own. Try it. It'll bring a little therapy to your holidays.

*Stephen Ilott is a professional home organizer with decluttering.ca and author of The Domestic Archaeologist. For more information, visit [www.decluttering.ca](http://www.decluttering.ca).*

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Phone: 416-340-1981

Web: [www.mediacouncil.ca](http://www.mediacouncil.ca)

**nnc** National NewsMedia Council **ocna**

newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

## WHO WE ARE

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Iouliana Polar

### Real Estate

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### Halton Media General Manager

Vicki Dillane

## CONTACT US

### The Independent & Free Press

280 Guelph Street, Unit 77

Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1

Phone: 905-873-0301

Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480

Fax: 905-873-0398

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