

Cops warn telephone offers usually are too good to be true

OPP are issuing a warning to Ontario residents concerning fraudulent telephone solicitations.

Police say there have been several reported occurrences of telephone fraud recently. The following are common elements in many of the schemes.

Typically the telephone solicitors advise people they have won a prize, or have an opportunity to win. Usually there is some purchase to be made before the prize can be collected. The caller suggests payment for the product or service being purchased be made by credit card, and asks for a credit card number. Once the number is given, the customer is immediately charged the agreed-upon amount.

"The majority of these types of telephone solicitations are designed to mislead potential customers, to make them believe they're going to get something at a much better price than anywhere else," said Insp. Ken Christopherson of the OPP's anti-rackets branch.

"The value or nature of the prize, or the requirements for claiming it,

may be misrepresented," said Insp. Christopherson. "What you think you heard and what was actually said may be two different things, but even if what you heard was exactly what was said, it's difficult to prove misrepresentation."

A customer's first indication of a problem may be his or her credit

card statement. Persons who believe they've purchased a bargain holiday from a so-called travel agent, for example, may find their credit card statement indicates the money went to a restaurant, car rental agency or some other business. This is probably because the telephone solicitor has no arrange-

ment with a credit card company, and is using an imprinting machine belonging to some other business to process orders.

"By the time you get your credit statement and realize something is wrong, it's too late," Insp. Christopherson said. "The money is gone."

Throughout North America, it's estimated the calls bring in hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

"There are two keys when dealing with telephone solicitors. Never reveal your credit card number over the phone, and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

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Information meeting May 9th from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at 468 Steeles Ave. W., Milton, Ontario (Dorset Park Plaza).

R.S.V.P. to Elaine at 878-8486.

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