



TELEPHONE SCAM

Fraudsters bilk \$5K from Halton resident

By Tim Whitnell
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

"Mom, mom, don't hang up! I am hurt and I have a broken nose. I need help! Don't hang up. I am so sorry. I love you."

With those words, a Halton Region resident was immediately, unwittingly and emotionally roped into the world of fraudulent schemes, ultimately costing her and her husband \$5,000.

Lori — not her real name as she requested anonymity, with Halton police confirming she made a report to them — is by her own description a "young" senior who believed she was too aware and knowledgeable to fall prey to the many financial schemers and scammers out there.

It all began with a morning phone call. On the other end of the line, supposedly, was her 30-something son.

He lives in eastern Ontario.

The panicked, agonized voice calling her 'mom' told her he had been in a car accident in western Quebec, the other driver had suf-

fered broken bones and he was accused of impaired driving.

Her son had apparently broken his nose in the accident and required a lot of stitches. He was arrested and in a Quebec jail. He needed money for bail and medical expenses.

"You're just flattened. You're envisioning him hurting in a jail cell," Lori said of her visceral reaction to that first phone call.

The man, claiming to be her son, was quickly replaced on the line by another man saying he was an Ottawa-area lawyer representing him.

"I immediately Googled the name and there is a lawyer by that name in that city. The picture looked convincing of the age of the man I spoke with. He sounded very kind and very caring," said Lori.

There were about 10 phone calls made by the 'son' and his lawyer over two days in mid-March, she said.

Lori said her supposed son's voice did sound a bit off or different.

"I enquired as to whether he had suffered a concussion and was told that an MRI had been done and he was good but was on

strong pain medication so he might sound a little dozy."

Lori said the people posing as her son and the lawyer knew certain personal and professional details about their son that left them with no suspicion they were being duped.

She said at some point the lawyer told her he was trying to get the case postponed because of a "harsh" judge assigned to the case, and that Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) had reps in the courtroom for his case.

Eventually, the lawyer called to say the judge had dropped all the charges on the condition that the victim's medical bills be paid because they were from outside Canada and had no insurance.

Then the emotion and the stakes were ramped up considerably in a later phone call from their son.

"He was telling me that this victim with the broken arm had died and he was blamed for the death. The charges were increased and were of a very serious nature. He kept saying, 'Mom, it was only one bottle of beer.'"

Honor

"The gut wrenching horror was overwhelming and it seemed so real as the phrases were phrases that my son would use."

The 'lawyer' kept telling Lori that Quebec police are difficult to work with. She was told that bail was needed and half was going to be paid by a 'so-called friend' of her son.

"Mr. Kind Lawyer," as Lori now sarcastically refers to him, "said he was going to get the court stuff rolling and would have my son released by the end of the day."

"The bail needed to be sent immediately and to address it to a court clerk and he gave me her name. He gave me his cellphone number and asked me to let him know when the money was sent."

"He very kindly offered me the address of a Western Union in my vicinity," she recalled.

"Of course, I got a second call and the so-called friend had reneged on posting the other half of the bail, so once again I was off to send another amount of money to the same so-called court clerk."

In all, five wire transfers, two the first day and three the second, all for \$1,000 each, were sent via Western Union to a couple of locations in the Montreal area.

"This is not unusual as I have legitimately sent money via Western Union before," said Lori.

At one point Lori said she asked the lawyer if they could call their son on his cellphone, but was told it had been confiscated. She also was told their son had spoken to his partner and not to call her.

"Emotions escalated that night as I could only envision my son injured and hurting in a jail cell. Lack of sleep, as well as emotion, had totally overtaken me," said Lori.

"Despair is the only way to describe it," she said.

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