

Canada Revenue Agency warns of email scam

CRA reminds the public it never solicits personal information via email

THE GAZETTE MARCH 3, 2014



An email scam, bearing the Canada Revenue Agency logo, is making the rounds of Canadians' inboxes. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Sean Kilpatrick

Photograph by: Sean Kilpatrick, THE CANADIAN PRESS

If you received an unsolicited email claiming to be from the Canada Revenue Agency about a possible tax return, delete it immediately and call police.

With tax season upon us, the email scam is making the rounds of Canadians' inboxes. Bearing the CRA logo and littered with spelling and grammar mistakes, the message reads: "Our records indicate insufficient (sic) information for your income tax return. As a result, you have to been (sic) exempt from the Canadian Tax reporting and withholdings (sic) on claims to be payd (sic) to you." It asks the recipient to click on a link to fill out a form to apply for a tax return.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre has been inundated with reports about the email scam, said Corporal Louis Robertson, manager of the CAFC in North Bay, Ont.

"It's a very popular fraud scheme at this time of year," he said.

The fraud has been going on since the 1990s and recurs every year around tax time, he said.

If you received the email but did not click on the link, there is no need to report the fraud to the CAFC. If

you did click on it and provided fraudsters with personal information, contact CAFC by email at info@antifraudcentre.ca or by phone at 1-888-495-8501.

Robertson said the purpose of the fraud, usually seeking credit card and passport information, is identity theft.

Scam artists behind such schemes could be based anywhere in the world, which is why it is very difficult to track them down, he said.

Mylène Croteau of the CRA said the tax agency does not send emails requesting personal information from taxpayers and people should be on guard against such scams.

You can find examples of similar scams on the CRA's website at cra-arc.gc.ca/ntcs/frdIntmls-eng.html.

If you get an email purporting to be from the revenue agency, ask yourself:

Am I expecting additional money from the CRA?

Does this sound too good to be true?

Is the requester asking for information I would not include with my tax return?

Is the requester asking for information I know the CRA already has on file for me?

How did the requester get my email address?

Am I confident I know who is asking for the information?

March is Fraud Awareness Month and the CAFC is warning consumers and businesses to be on the lookout for scams, many of which target seniors.

Other common ruses often used to swindle money from vulnerable seniors include:

The Emergency-Grandparent Scam, which is aimed at persuading seniors to believe a family member or friend is in trouble and in need of financial aid.

The Prize Scam, which tricks victims into believing they have won a lottery/sweepstakes.

The Bank Inspector Scam persuades victims to expose a possible fraudulent cashier at a bank by withdrawing funds for a supposed investigator.

Scammers are practised con artists who use tactics to gain victims' trust and friendship or to scare them into parting with their money, in some cases their life savings, according to the CAFC.

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette