

# VICTIMS OF FRAUD



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In today's world, many people are becoming victims of fraud. We hear or read about it a lot lately but think, "It will never happen to me."

As women, we are a giving people by nature, eager to help someone less fortunate than we are. We make generous donations to good causes and try to ensure that we will be comfortable in our old age and not a financial burden on our family. We save a few dollars toward retirement. We want to leave something to our family after we are gone. We invest in the stock market.

Then one day, we find out that we are penniless. Our savings and investments are gone. Our bank accounts are cleaned out. Someone has been using our identity to obtain credit cards and we now owe thousands of dollars. What happened? Where can we turn? How can we keep this from happening, if it hasn't already? I want to share with you a few scenarios to watch for. Hopefully, these will help you become more aware of suspicious situations and more able to protect yourself from becoming a victim of fraud.

**Scenario one:** Someone has contacted you and promised you a fantastic return on a deal that is a sure thing. You will be rich, but you have to send money right away to "Company X" because this is an once-in-a-lifetime offer and there are only a few select people contacted to join. You are one of the lucky ones. The person is very convincing and you believe what you are told. This person has gained your trust. You dip into your savings and send the amount requested, only to find out later that you have been scammed, never to see your money again or to ever know the identity of the caller.

**Scenario two:** This scenario seems so innocent but could cause the most damage. It is a call from a person who claims to be a friend from high school and wants to renew old acquaintances. The two-way conversation could go something like this:



"Hi Rachael, this is Tom Johnson calling. We went to high school together in 1962. I am looking up old school chums and decided to give you a call." Your mind may be thrown off track because you do not want "Tom" to know you cannot recall his name. After all, you must know him if he knows you. He goes on to ask, "How is your mom, Jean, doing? She was a real nice lady. I always liked her. She made the best apple pies."

You are now feeling more comfortable and forget you cannot recall Tom's name, because after all, Mom did make the best apple pies. So you say, "Mom's name was Gladys. She was a Smith, from Point Black. She's not with us anymore. She passed away in 1988. God bless her."

He goes on to say, "I am sorry to hear that, she will be missed. You and I have a birthday coming up this month if I remember correctly. We were born in the same year, 1944, weren't we?"

Innocently you reply, "No, you must have that mixed up. I was born on October 13, 1947."

"Oh, my mistake," he says. "I must give you a call next year and wish you a happy birthday. Maybe we can get together. I want you to meet my wife, Louise. Oops, I have another call coming in. I am waiting on a long distance call and have to answer it. I will keep in touch. Nice talking with you." The man

hangs up. You have just given away all the information needed for him to steal your identity and clean out your bank account.

**Scenario three:** Most of us use automated teller machines (ATMs) for various transactions and that is fine as long as they are attached to a bank or inside a business. Did you know that stand alone ATM machines are privately owned and probably do not have a security video camera for monitoring?

Let's say you use your bank card in an outdoor ATM machine then go shopping later that day. You try to pay for your purchases with your bank card but it is turned down for lack of funds. This can't be! You had almost \$1,000 in your account! You report the incident and, after an investigation is conducted, it is found that the outdoor ATM had an illegal

electronic device attached called a “reader”. (Readers can be purchased online as well as from some electronics stores and are easily installed and removed in seconds.)

You had put in your card and the reader gathered your information. The thief removed the reader, scanned it, and used the information to empty your account. You also find out that 11 other people were scammed by the same machine.

It is so easy to unwittingly become victims of fraud. There are many illegal activities happening every day, each designed to relieve us of our hard-earned money. These activities are becoming more complex and harder to deal with. Some more elaborate and illegal activities are pyramid and Ponzi schemes, which have been reported in the news the last two years.

I would like to share with you some tips that may help you to protect yourself from becoming a victim. You may have heard these before, but it is always nice to be reminded.

- When you are not sure about an organization or group requesting donations, check it out first. Contact the organization and ask questions.
- Be wary of “get rich quick” schemes. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Invest with reputable, established brokers only. Verify their credentials and ask for references.
- Only use ATM machines located in banks or with a security camera nearby.
- When using ATM machines, protect your pin number with one hand as you key in the number with the other.
- Do not share passwords with anyone.
- Keep personal information confidential.
- Be alert and become more informed.
- Report anything or anyone suspicious.
- If you realize you have become a victim of fraud, report it right away. It may help retrieve your stolen money and catch the thief.
- Never send money upfront in order to receive a fantastic gift from a company.

For more information on how to be better protected against fraud, contact the Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus. It has offices in every province. As well, here are some Web sites to visit that will be helpful in your queries.

- <http://www.bbb.org/canada/charity/>
- <http://www.donating2charity.com/>
- <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay>
- <http://personalmoneystore.com/moneyblog/2009/03/24/sounds-good-true/>

Protect yourself and your money! Beware! Beware! Beware! †



*For God and Canada*

## ST. LOUIS PARISH COUNCIL

Waterloo, Ontario



L-R: Member Alice Albert with long-time League sister Teresa Andres.

In September, St. Louis Parish Council was made aware that member Alice Albert had won her “dream wish” from her retirement home. Alice had moved in 2002 to be closer to relatives but kept in contact with St. Louis Parish Council, renewing her membership annually. The retirement home contacted the parish council as Alice’s “dream wish” was to attend a CWL function with her old friends.

To fulfill Alice’s dream, a rail trip “home” to St. Louis Parish Council was arranged by the retirement home’s activity director where a noon hour mass was celebrated, followed by a luncheon. The hall was adorned with pastel luncheon cloths, bouquets of flowers and smiling faces. Happy memories of days gone by were shared by all.

## ERRATA

1. Fall 2009, page 7. Our apology to Sacred Heart Parish Council for printing that the parish has closed. In fact, it was a mission church of the parish that closed.
2. Fall 2009, page 29. It was erroneously printed that Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Council celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In fact, it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the province.