

## Sweepstakes/Lottery Scams from Canada



Residents, especially seniors, should be aware of scams which have generally been operating from Canada and other countries.

Those who seem to be most susceptible to these scams are people who participate in sweepstakes entries, which they receive through the mail.

These new scams involve con artists who attempt to convince the victim that he/she has won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes. They will usually contact the victim by phone and advise them that they have won a large amount of money, usually in excess of \$100,000, and that they (the caller) is from the United States or Canadian Customs office. The caller will tell the victim that to receive the check, they must first pay taxes or some type of fee. This amount varies but could be several thousand dollars.

Usually the calls are made from Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. The callers are very convincing and ask that the money be sent by Western Union or otherwise wired to a location in Canada.

Victims may be contacted more than once by someone other than the original caller telling the victim that the caller is an attorney with a bank in Canada verifying the victim's winnings or giving them a phone number to call to verify the winnings.

Once the victim sends the money, he/she is usually contacted again and advised that the money that the victim sent was not enough to satisfy the taxes or fees and more money will need to be sent.

The FBI advised that over \$100 million has been stolen and that the figure will probably rise.

The callers are very convincing and do not give up easily. Here are some things to consider:

- Trust your instincts; If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Be suspicious of unsolicited calls inquiring if you would like your name entered into lottery pools, especially foreign.
- Mail which is notifying you of winning large sums of money.
- Notification of winnings in which the caller advises seniors not to tell their children or friends of their winnings.

Legitimate lotteries or sweepstakes never operate in this way. If you have been the victim of such a scam, do not be embarrassed to contact the police to report the crime.