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The Commercial Crime and Fraud Sections with the Regina Police Service, Saskatoon Police Service, Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission and the RCMP have joined forces to promote March as Fraud Awareness Month (www.sacp.ca/fraudawareness) to Saskatchewan residents and consumers.

Public education and awareness is key in preventing and reducing the number of victims of fraud. During the fourth week of Fraud Awareness Month, the fraudulent activity to be profiled is romance fraud.

What is Romance Fraud?

A romance fraud is a confidence trick involving feigned romantic intentions towards a victim, gaining her or his affection and then using that goodwill to commit fraud. Fraudulent acts may involve gaining access to the victim's money, bank accounts, credit cards, passports, or email accounts. It can also include getting the victims to commit financial fraud on behalf of the suspect.

Who are the potential victims of a romance fraud?

It can be anyone, male or female, young or old. The con men/women are targeting single men and women who are looking for love. These fraudsters are adept at using any weakness they can find to their advantage. They might use poetry or gifts to lure you in or they might promise you marriage and an end to your loneliness. Once they have you under their spell, they will try to reach for your wallet, all the time declaring their "undying love" for you.

How to protect yourself against romantic fraud:

- Acknowledge that you could be a potential target. Who is the most vulnerable? Someone who thinks that it can't happen to them. If you are honest, open and try to see the best in people, don't change who you are, but recognize that you could be a con artist's perfect victim.
- A con person can be so persuasive that intuition alone may not provide a loud enough alert. Make sure you talk to trusted friends and family about



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new relationships, introduce your new “friend” to them and ask for their feedback. They may see things that you are blind to because they can be more objective.

- Recognize your own weak spots, such as a great desire to be in a relationship. If a strong social, sexual or financial relationship is starting to develop, be cynical.

Where do we find these con men/women?

Perpetrators of romance fraud can appear anywhere: at work, on vacation, online or even at your place of worship. Be especially cautious of men and women who have no apparent connections with relatives, friends or colleagues. Ask yourself, “Why are these men/women single? Where are their commitments?”

Other red flags to watch out for:

- ❖ The relationship takes off like a rocket.
- ❖ He/she overwhelms you with attention, eye contact, gifts and promises of adventure.
- ❖ He/she keeps you on a short leash with frequent phone calls.
- ❖ He/she meets your relatives/friends but you never meet his/hers due to many different excuses.
- ❖ He/she becomes evasive or testy when questioned.
- ❖ Your intuition tells you that he’s/she’s too good to be true.
- ❖ He/she asks for access to your financial information or credit cards.
- ❖ He/she asks you to sell your house or other belongings so that you can “buy a new house together”

Reporting a fraud:

If you suspect you’re being conned, end the relationship immediately. Change your locks and don’t confront him/her. Most cons won’t return for revenge but there are always exceptions and confrontation is risky.



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Contact your local police department and report the con. Sometimes this is more difficult than ending the relationship because nobody wants to admit they've been fooled. Overcome that reluctance; you owe it to yourself and to anyone else who might become this fraudster's next victim. Police will not judge you and will do all they can to investigate.

Lying about love is not a crime. But, if your con man/woman defrauds or steals from you or even if you're not sure a crime has been committed, contact police. You can also call The Canadian Anti Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501.

Fraud Awareness is part of a national crime prevention campaign to increase Canadians' awareness of and knowledge about different types of fraud in order to help citizens to not become fraud victims. RCMP Saskatchewan's "F" Division Commercial Crime Section has offices in Regina and Saskatoon. Their role is to reduce the impact of economic crime on Canadians by maintaining the integrity of our economy through public education, crime prevention, and enforcement.

To better educate yourself with this scam and others, please visit www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/scams or www.antifraudcentre.ca

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For further information contact:

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