

# Personal Investor: CRA tax scammers have reached a new low

By Dale Jackson

No one wants to come home at the end of the day and hear there is a warrant out for their arrest.

The ongoing Canada Revenue Agency phone scam has now sunk to that level. It starts with mildly demanding voicemail messages warning you owe the CRA money, telling you to call a number and even wishing you luck if you fail to obey.

From there, the telephone messages tell you court proceedings have begun, threatens liens on your property, and warns the cops are on their way to put you in jail.

It's hard to believe anyone would fall for it but most Canadians pay someone to complete their tax returns and aren't quite sure how they work. Even the most honest people might question whether they made a mistake somewhere along the line, or are victims of a bureaucratic error.

Scams are nothing new to the CRA but the scammers are always finding new ways through phone, text or email. They will often demand a social insurance number, credit card numbers, bank accounts or passports. Sometimes they urge you to visit a fake website. The process is called phishing. Once you click on a link they can download your personal information.

Some scammers even tell you to send money immediately.

The CRA recommends taxpayers set up an account on its secure website calls "My Account." They will email your registration to you and you can confirm it online. It will also notify you via email when you have a message in your account.

My Account also comes in handy to review past returns, or finding contribution limits on tax free savings accounts (TFSA) and registered retirement savings plans (RRSP).

The CRA says they will “never” do the following:

- Contact anyone for personal or financial information
- Request payments from prepaid credit cards
- Give personal information to a third party
- Leave personal information on voicemail

They also warn people not to call back the number that’s left on the message. They often have fake caller IDs and reaching out to them plays right into their hands. Anyone contacted by a scammer is urged to report it to their local police.

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