

IDENTITY THEFT – BE AWARE!

TD Meloche Monnex is proud to present these safety tips to help you avoid falling victim to identity theft - the fastest growing type of fraud in the marketplace and the number one consumer complaint in North America.



What is Identity Theft?

Identity theft refers to use of your name and personal information by someone else for the purpose of committing fraud or theft. It takes different forms including:

- Financial fraud (bank fraud, credit card, taxes, debit card, mail fraud)
- Criminal activities (e.g. entering the country, organized crimes, drug trafficking, gaining access to restricted areas, etc).

Why You Should Be Concerned About ID Theft

Any personal identification (drivers license, credit card, SIN card) can be used to open credit card and bank accounts, redirect mail, rent vehicles, establish cellular phone accounts, and even secure employment. If someone has used (“stolen”) your identity, you could be left with bills, charges, bad cheques, and possibly problems with the law if your imposter has committed crimes.

Protect Personal Information – only you can ensure it doesn't happen to you!

Identity theft is not a new activity or crime. The internet has provided those intent on committing identity theft with an efficient means of capturing privately held personal, financial and sensitive information on your computer or in your mailbox. The two major Canadian credit bureaus indicate that they receive approximately 1,400-1,800 identity theft complaints per month. The majority of complaints are from Ontario.

Three Ways to Protect Yourself

You can't completely prevent identity theft, especially if someone is determined to commit the crime. But you can minimize your risk.

1. **Guard your personal information** – once you've given your identification or financial information to someone in person, by mail, e-mail, phone or over the Internet you **can't get it back!** When someone asks for your information, especially as identification, ask why they need it and what they will use it for.

2. **Keep your computer and its contents safe** – computer technology makes it easy for anyone anywhere in the world to find your personal and financial information. Your personal computer can be an identity thief's best friend.

Minimize your risk by installing a proven “anti-virus” product and ensure that security patches are applied. Always use caution with links supplied in emails if you suspect that the message may not be authentic (if you don't recognize the sender or understand the subject or message). Always ensure that a secure website is used when submitting credit card or other sensitive information via your web browser (this is usually displayed in the status bar).

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3. **Be vigilant** – pay attention to details. Once a year get a credit report from the two major credit reporting agencies.

Pay attention to credit card expiry dates, if you haven't received your renewal in a timely manner someone may have stolen it from your mailbox. Consider buying a shredder to prevent “dumpster divers” from stealing statements thrown in the trash.

What Should I do if I Think ID Theft has Happened to Me?

- Take immediate action. Contact other companies or agencies that may have accounts in your name.
- Contact the fraud departments of each of the two major credit bureaus and request a “Fraud Alert” be placed on your file:
 - Equifax **1 800 465 7166**
 - TransUnion **1 877 525 3823**

Once notified, these two agencies can provide you with copies of your credit reports. Certain fees may apply.



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