



COQUITLAM RCMP PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY

To: All residents of Anmore, Belcarra, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam
DATE: May 28, 2009
ISSUE: The Coquitlam RCMP Fraud Section has been notified of an increase in cheque overpayment frauds in the Lower Mainland. **Several of these incidents victimized residents of the Coquitlam RCMP's jurisdiction.**

HOW CHEQUE OVERPAYMENT FRAUD WORKS:

- You place an ad to sell an item or rent a property & are contacted by an interested party (the fraudster) using method of communication with low identity verification requirements (i.e.; webmail accounts, "pay-as-you-go" cell phones).
- A price is negotiated but you receive a cheque from the fraudster for an amount much larger than the negotiated price.
- The fraudster asks that you cash the cheque, keep the negotiated amount (& maybe a little more "for your trouble") & send the overpay amount to them or another contact through a low-identity verification financial service agency.
- After cashing the cheque & sending the overpay amount back, you discover that the cheque was forged & identity of the fraudster cannot be traced.

THE RECENT INCIDENTS IN THE LOWER MAINLAND SHARE SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- The victims all had rental properties advertised on Craigslist.
- The fraudster claims to be from the UK moving to Canada for Olympics-related work.
- The addresses for the overpay amount are located in the US.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Frauds are very difficult to investigate so it is vital that you take steps to protect yourself. It is also vital that frauds are reported so that police have the best & most complete information to support investigations. If you have been a victim of fraud, contact the **Coquitlam RCMP Fraud Section at 604-945-1550.**

- **Before accepting a cheque from a stranger:**
 - Ask for picture ID with a signature on it & insist that the cheque-writer endorse the cheque in your presence so you can confirm identity & compare signatures.
 - Ensure the cheque is properly dated, completed & shows no signs of alteration.
 - If the cheque is a company cheque, call the business for verification.
- **DO NOT**
 - Accept post-dated, second-party or counter (i.e.; no pre-printed information) cheques.
 - Accept cheques for an amount greater than a negotiated price or hold cheques for a future date.
 - Do business with strangers through low-verification modes of communications & banking. Insist on identity verification & use institutions that you trust.
- **DO**
 - Keep records of all financial transactions, including cancelled cheques.
 - Walk away from a deal if you feel pressured or you think it is "too good to be true".
 - Report suspicious & criminal activity ... **if you SEE something, SAY something!**