



# CANADIAN ANTI-FRAUD CENTRE BULLETIN

Romance Scams

2023-02-10

FRAUD: RECOGNIZE, REJECT, REPORT

Every year around Valentine's Day, fraudsters are on the look-out for unsuspecting victims. In some cases, victims may be contacted on dating websites or social media and then asked to switch to a different method of communication. It is common for suspects to use pictures found on social media of real people (ie. business people, members of the military, family photos), pet photos and hobbies. Scammers will often edit these pictures based on the lies they have told.

The Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) continues to receive a large number of reports from individuals that have fallen victim to various types of romance scams including (but not limited to) scams that begin on dating websites and trick victims into investing in fake cryptocurrency platforms, with the promise of large monetary returns.

## **New variation:**

Fraudsters are sending random text messages to victims. The messages often read "where are you?", "where have you been?" or something similar. Once the victim responds, a conversation is started and the fraudster attempts to build a relationship with the victim. Some of the reports received include the fraudster convincing the victim to invest into a fraudulent cryptocurrency platform.

Scammers have requested money for many reasons, including:

- a personal/family emergency,
- claims they have no access to their existing funds,
- unexpected business expenses, legal expenses or professional fees,
- investing in a new business and they need the victims' help, and
- travel fees to return home.

## **Warning signs**

Beware of:

- profiles that seem too perfect,
- someone you haven't met in person professes their love to you,
- a suspect that tries to move communication to a more private or different method of communication (email, text, social media platform, etc.),
- any attempts to meet in person get cancelled or there's always an excuse to not meet-up,



Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Gendarmerie royale du Canada



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- a person who discourages you from talking about them to friends and family,
- a suspect acting distressed or angry to force you into sending more money,
- poorly written messages or messages addressed to the wrong name,
- an individual who “introduces” you to their family on social media to legitimize the relationship, or
- unsolicited text messages from phone numbers you don’t recognize.

### **How to protect yourself**

- Don’t give out your personal information (name, address, DOB, SIN, banking credentials).
- Don’t accept friend requests from people you do not know.
- Don’t invest your money in platforms provided by people you don’t know.
- Be careful who you share images with. Suspects will often use explicit pictures to extort victims into sending more money.
- Protect your online accounts.
- Never send money to someone you haven’t met.
- Don’t respond to text messages from phone numbers you do not recognize.
- Learn [more tips and tricks for protecting yourself](#).

Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of cybercrime or fraud should report it to their local police and to the CAFC’s [online reporting system](#) or by phone at 1-888-495-8501. If not a victim, report it to the CAFC anyway.