

## Identity Theft: Prevention & Preparedness



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### Managing Your Money

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Identity theft and fraud have been steadily on the rise in Canada. I've written a previous article on ways to prevent identity theft and protect yourself from cybercrime. However, in our highly digitalized world, where technology is used for nearly everything, even the most vigilant can become victims. Scams, identity theft, and cybercrimes can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. In fact, a friend of mine was just recently targeted, which is why I'm writing this article.

*"Identity theft can affect your credit rating without you even being aware of it."*

She was notified that a loan was being requested in her name – except she hadn't tried to get a loan! She contacted me for advice, and together we figured out the process of what to do, whom to contact, and how to move forward. I'm putting all the information together, in one spot to keep it handy. Having been there myself in the past with credit card fraud, the initial reaction is often one of panic. So, if you, or anyone you know become a victim, this will be an easy guide to help you through it. Save it and share it!



Identity theft is the unauthorized use of your information by third parties. It involves the collection and use of personal information such as your name, date of birth, address, social insurance number (SIN), and other personal details for criminal purposes. This personal information may be used to impersonate you and open a bank account, apply for loans or mortgages, obtain GST/HST rebates or refunds, benefit and credit payments, income tax refunds, and so on.

Identity theft can affect your credit rating without you even being aware of it. Sometimes, getting your credit rating back in good standing can take quite a

long time if you don't follow the right steps. The son of a friend discovered he had had his identity stolen when he applied for a Costco credit card, only to be denied twice. He was shocked to find out he had two other Costco cards as well as another credit card and a cellphone under his name! He filed a police report, informed the major credit watchdogs of the problem, and asked for the cards to be canceled. Despite those efforts, when he applied for a loan to buy a house 3 years later, he was told his credit score was still in dire straits. It turns out he missed one of the steps - disputing his credit score that had not been adjusted.

I'm going to repeat this: scams, identity theft, and cybercrimes can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time – even to the most vigilant. Yes, it's important to protect yourself, but it's also important to be prepared. In the event of loss or theft of your purse or wallet, many of the same steps apply. Bookmark this page or cut it out and save it – hoping that you'll never need it! Share it with your friends and family so that they will be prepared too.

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What you can do today: visit the 'Useful Tools' section under Resources on our website, ([www.EphtimiosMacNeil.com](http://www.EphtimiosMacNeil.com)) for steps to verify if you have been the victim of identity theft without realizing it. Make it a point to do this checkup once a year.

#### STEPS TO TAKE:

1. Notify all the **financial institutions** where you have banking, investments, credit, etc.
2. Contact your **local police department**  
Montreal: Neighbourhood Police – Service de police de la Ville de Montréal – SPVM (<https://spvm.qc.ca/en/pdq>)  
Laval: Police – Contact us ([laval.ca](http://laval.ca))
3. Contact the **Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)** at 1-800-959-8281
4. Report the theft to a credit reporting agency, and place fraud alerts on your file:  
**Equifax:** [www.equifax.ca](http://www.equifax.ca) 1-800-465-7166  
**TransUnion:** [www.transunion.ca](http://www.transunion.ca) 1-877-713-3393 (Quebec Residents)
5. After the fact, check your credit score. If the fraud has affected your credit score, file a dispute (more information available on our website)
6. Keep records of recent purchases, payments, and financial transactions

7. Call **1-800-O-Canada** (1-800-622-6232) for information on where and how to replace identity cards such as your health card, driver's license, or SIN if necessary
8. To report a fraudulent communication, or if your identity was stolen as part of a scam, please contact the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Phonebusters** by email at [info@phonebusters.com](mailto:info@phonebusters.com) or call 1-888-495-8501
9. Report it to the **Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre**  
Report online: Report fraud and cybercrime ([antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca](http://antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca))  
Report by phone: 1-888-495-8501  
To make it easier for Canadians to report cybercrime and fraud, the RCMP along with the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) is developing a new reporting system. It's available as a pilot project and should be fully in place by 2024. Visit our website for this link for more information on protecting yourself.  
– [www.EphtimiosMacNeil.com](http://www.EphtimiosMacNeil.com)

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