

# Phony Canadian Lottery Steals from the Elderly



By Greg Abbott  
Attorney General of Texas

Last month an elderly central Texas man was nearly taken for his entire life savings. He wanted the "prize money" he thought he had won in the Canadian Lottery to ensure that his wife, who is suffering from an advanced stage of Alzheimer's, would be taken care of for the duration of her life. He had already taken out a second mortgage and was preparing to fly to Montreal to personally deliver \$50,000 in "tax money" when we intervened.

Unfortunately, this case is not unusual. In that same month, we were made aware of three other senior Texans who lost anywhere from \$500 to \$3000 to the Canadian Lottery scam. Here is how the Canadian Lottery scam works.

It usually begins with a call from an enthusiastic and convincing telemarketer who informs you that you have won the Canadian Lottery. In some cases, the caller will tell you that to claim your prize, you must wire him money for taxes. Instead, you never see your money again, and the prize never arrives.

In a similar version of the scam, the caller asks for your bank account number so that the prize can be deposited directly. Instead, the con artists clean out your bank account. In yet another version, the caller asks for a credit card or bank account number "for verification purposes." Again, you lose.

You can protect yourself from falling prey to unscrupulous telemarketers. If someone calls and tells you that you have won the Canadian Lottery or ANY lottery, HANG UP! It is ILLEGAL for a US resident to participate in a foreign lottery. These callers will act like they are very happy and excited that you've won the lottery. They will try to befriend you to gain your confidence and use high-pressure tactics to get your money. Don't be fooled! These are professional con artists who know how to swindle you out of your savings! Never give out your credit card or bank account information to someone who calls you.

Callers to our office have occasionally reported receiving a telephone call from one of our own investigators or from the IRS, seeking up-front money to pay taxes or help recover lottery winnings or money lost through lottery or sweepstakes scams. Sometimes these "agents" or "investigators" ask for banking or credit card information under various pretexts.

Neither our office nor the IRS would ever contact you in this manner. We would never request your banking or credit card information, and we would certainly never ask you for money for any purpose. Report a call of this nature to law enforcement and to our office.

Sometimes, consumers who lose money through lottery scams are re-victimized by so-called "recovery center" scams. Victims desperate to recover their lost money are contacted by an organization that claims it can recover the lost money – for a fee.

Needless to say, the fee is due in advance, and the organization does not recover your money. These recovery centers are usually run by the very same people who stole the money in the first place, which is probably how they knew you were vulnerable to the "recovery" scam.

Through an organization called Project PhoneBusters, Canadian law enforcement officials are working to combat these scams. You can report a contact from the so-called Canadian Lottery to PhoneBusters by calling 888-495-8501 or by sending an e-mail to [info@phonebusters.com](mailto:info@phonebusters.com).

You can find more information at [www.phonebusters.com](http://www.phonebusters.com).

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

### LOTTERIES & SWEEPSTAKES

- You did not win the Canadian Lottery! Just HANG UP!
- It is ILLEGAL for US residents to participate in a foreign lottery. Just HANG UP!
- No legitimate lottery calls you out of the blue to tell you that you have won a huge prize. Just HANG UP!
- If someone calls you and asks you to send money for any reason, just HANG UP!
- Say no to high pressure sales tactics! Just HANG UP!
- No agent or investigator of the Office of the Attorney General or ANY government agency would ask for your banking or credit card information – or your money – for any reason. Just HANG UP!

Consumer Protection Hotline:  
800-621-0508

Report Canadian Lottery calls to  
PhoneBusters by calling  
1-888-495-8501  
[info@phonebusters.com](mailto:info@phonebusters.com)



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Information on this and other topics is available on the  
Attorney General's Web site at [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us).