

Residents continue to be targeted by OEB fraud

Since October of 2020, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) in Eastern Ontario have received an increased number of complaints from homeowners who have been solicited by individuals claiming to be associated with the Ontario Energy Board (OEB). The OEB does not engage and is not involved in any type of sales activity.

Typically, the individuals will contact a homeowner by way of telephone requesting to attend the residence in order to conduct a green energy assessment to qualify for a green energy rebate or Ontario Rebate Program for COVID-19 relief. Once in the home, the representative will use high pressure sales tactics to have the homeowner purchase products and services in order to qualify for a rebate.

Door-to-door scams continue to pose a threat to Ontario consumers and businesses. Door-to-door salespeople can use high pressure tactics and can be aggressive in nature. Consumers may find themselves in a situation where they purchase a product or sign up for a service contract they neither need nor want.

The OEB has received in excess of 710 complaints related to energy scams in 2020 from consumers across the province.

In 2019, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre receive 1,641 complaints related to service scams affecting 863 Ontario residents, for a loss of \$2,878,898. Door-to-door scams reported to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre include solicitations or a service scam involving the sale or maintenance of an appliance.

On March 1, 2018, Ontario banned unsolicited, door-to-door sales of certain household appliances to better protect consumers from aggressive and misleading contracting at home. The new rules apply to air cleaners, air conditioners, air purifiers, duct cleaning services, furnaces, water filters, water heaters, water purifiers, water softeners, water treatment devices as well as bundles of these goods and services.

On January 1, 2017, Ontario banned energy retailers from signing up customers for an energy contract while at their homes to give consumers the ability to make choices about their energy supply at their own pace and with better information.

Know your rights under the Consumer Protection Act, at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/your-rights-under-consumer-protection-act>

How can people of Ontario protect themselves?

? Ask for photo ID, get the name of the person and the name of the company or charity they represent;

? Be sure to get it in writing, ask for literature and don't feel pressured to make a decision on the spot;

? Never share any personal information or copies of any bills or financial statements;

? Research before you invest. Don't sign anything and always read the fine print;

? An energy retailer cannot sign you up for an energy contract while they are at your home. For more information about the rules that energy retailers have to follow, visit: <https://www.oeb.ca/knockknock>.

? For other contracts signed within the home, you have a cooling off period. For example, consumers in Ontario have the right to cancel a contract for any reason within a 10-day cooling off period. For water heater contracts, there is a 20-day cooling off period; and

? To learn about programs and credits to reduce your electricity bill, visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/yourelectricitybill>.

If you believe you have become a victim of fraud, contact your local police service and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at 1-888-495-8501 (toll-free) or report online at www.antifraudcentre.ca. You can also call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or report the incident online at www.ontariocrimestoppers.ca.