

## Identity theft and payment card fraud

As part of Fraud Prevention Month, the OPP believes greater awareness can help prevent consumers from becoming victims of fraud through identity theft and payment cards.

Typical identity theft cases include situations where government documents ? such as drivers' licences, health cards, Social Insurance Number (S.I.N.) cards and birth certificates ? have been unlawfully obtained or forged. Criminals can use your stolen identity documents to:

- ? access your computer and email accounts
- ? access your bank accounts, open new bank accounts or transfer bank balances
- ? apply for loans, credit cards and other goods and services
- ? make purchases
- ? hide their criminal activities
- ? obtain passports or receive government benefits.

According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC), in 2013 there were 6,275 complaints of identity theft in Canada. Of those complaints, 4,898 victims were identified and their combined financial losses exceeded \$11million.

The consequences of having your identity compromised can have lasting effects on your life including potential employers, individual finances and credit ratings, and your dealings with government and other agencies.

The OPP Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau ? Identity Crimes Unit also makes use of stronger legislative tools with which to charge criminals for possessing the personal information of others and prevent it from being used for fraud or theft.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of identity or payment card fraud, contact your local police service or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS). Fraud ? recognize it, report it, stop it.