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## **Scam Alerts:**

While we are working to combat COVID-19, thieves and scammers are keeping busy, particularly with phone identity theft. Since it is now possible to transfer a cell phone number to another service, a thief can request to 'port' an identity connection to another phone, and information on the SIM card goes to the new service, including password, links to financial institutions, credit cards and social media. The thief can then access links and identity information from the victim for other thefts or scam initiatives.

How can we combat that? Reply promptly to any porting inquiry from our mobile service. Secure passwords help. Minimize or delete identity information on the phone. Use two-step authentications for online access.

Scammers will also phone you to try to get personal information. Caller ID is of no help here, since the number you see may have been hijacked. If the call is a recording from "the police" or "Visa" or "MasterCard" (or both) or "some government office," you can probably just hang up. Those organizations do not use recorded messages. If it is a real person on the phone, do not provide any information such as your name, address, or credit card information. Politely state something like "Sorry, I'm not interested," and then hang up without listening to what the caller says. They will have had more experience than you in how to entice you to stay on the line. Just ignore what they say.

Here are some popular COVID-19 scams designed to separate you from your money. None of the following is genuine:

- Cleaning or heating companies offer duct cleaning services or air filters to protect you
- from COVID-19.
- Fraudulent organizations offer lists of people infected with COVID-19 in your
- neighbourhood so you can avoid them without talking to confirm their illness.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada informs you that you have been tested positive for
- COVID-19. It needs your health card and credit card numbers for a prescription.
- Fake charities offer free medical products (e.g. masks) for a donation.
- Government departments send out corona virus-themed E-Mails to trick you into opening
- malicious attachments or reveal sensitive personal and financial details
- Financial advisors pressure people to invest in hot new stocks related to COVID-19.
- Private companies offer fraudulent COVID-19 tests for sale.

Beware!! Do not believe any of the above scams.