

## Powers of attorney

Whenever you give another person a power of attorney that permits them to deal with your personal assets, talk to your lawyers or advisers about appropriate limitations.

## Contact information

### The Office of the Director of Titles

Policy and Regulation Branch  
20 Dundas Street West, 4th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C2  
(P) 416-314-4882  
(F) 416-314-4878

### Ontario's Land Registry Offices

For information on what services are offered by your local land registry office, please visit:  
[www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection](http://www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection)  
416-326-8555  
1-800-268-1142

### Identity Theft Statement and Information Package

[www.phonebusters.com/images/IDTheftStatement.pdf](http://www.phonebusters.com/images/IDTheftStatement.pdf)

### PhoneBusters

1-888-495-8501  
[www.phonebusters.com](http://www.phonebusters.com)

### Equifax Canada

1-800-465-7166  
[www.equifax.ca](http://www.equifax.ca)

### TransUnion Canada

1-877-525-3823  
[www.transunion.ca](http://www.transunion.ca)

## Need Help?

Ontario consumers with questions, complaints or comments regarding telemarketing fraud can call the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, Consumer Protection Branch at **1-800-889-9768** or **416-326-8800**.

The Consumer Protection Branch website at **[www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection](http://www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection)** has more information and valuable advice for Ontario consumers on a number of topics:

- Merchandise Purchases
- Home Renovations
- Memberships and Services
- Motor Vehicles
- Personal Finances
- Travel
- Scams and Frauds
- Identity Theft
- Collection Agencies

For tips on protecting yourself in the marketplace, information on consumer rights and how to make a complaint against a business, visit the new and improved consumer protection website at **[www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection](http://www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection)** or call toll-free the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, Consumer Protection Branch at **1-800-889-9768** or, in the Toronto area, **416-326-8800**.

Order a free copy of the annual Smart Consumer Calendar at **[www.serviceontario.ca/publications](http://www.serviceontario.ca/publications)** or by calling toll-free at **1-800-668-9938** or, in the Toronto area, at **416-326-5300**.

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REAL ESTATE FRAUD



Smart consumers are good for business

**Ontario is a leader in consumer protection and has set out clear rules for consumers and businesses. Know your rights – shop smart and protect yourself in the marketplace.**

### **What is real estate fraud?**

Real estate fraud is used to describe different types of fraud that focus on real estate transactions. Real estate fraud has two components: mortgage fraud and title fraud.

#### **Mortgage fraud**

Mortgage fraud occurs when the value of a property is inflated to deceive a mortgage lender. This is done through a series of sales and resales of a home (also known as “value flips”) in order to obtain a higher mortgage amount than would otherwise be granted. Mortgage fraud can also occur when a mortgage is fraudulently obtained based on false information or false identification.

#### **Title fraud**

Title fraud generally hurts individual homeowners and often involves fraudsters using stolen identities or forged documents to transfer a registered owner’s title to themselves without the registered owner’s knowledge. A mortgage is secured on the property and, once the funds are advanced, the criminal disappears.

Of the approximately two million real estate transactions in Ontario annually, there are, on average, fewer than 10 land title frauds.



### **Protect your property by protecting your identity**

Although Ontario’s land registration system has a proven track record for security, accuracy and efficiency, it is impossible to avoid fraud completely.

Ontario homeowners can take an active role in protecting their property by protecting themselves from identity thieves.

#### **Some tips include:**

- Always store personal information, including your birth certificate, Social Insurance Number (SIN) card, bank account numbers and credit card details, in a secure place that others cannot access.
- Never carry your birth certificate or SIN card in your wallet.
- Shred documents like credit card statements before you discard them.
- Never reply to spam or e-mails that ask for banking information, credit card details, passwords or other sensitive information involving property you own.
- Check references from prospective renters if you are renting your property and be sure to check on your rental property regularly.

### **Be alert to identity theft**

Pay attention to the following in order to detect fraud early:

- Tax statements or bills that are unexpectedly mailed to your home, addressed to a different individual.
- Phone calls from callers asking about a new mortgage that has already been arranged for your property.
- Bills that do not arrive as expected.
- Creditors who contact you about purchases you did not make.
- Discrepancies in your bank or credit card statements.

### **What if I am a victim of real estate fraud?**

If you think you are a victim of real estate fraud, it is important that you act quickly. Follow these steps to get help:

- Report what happened to your local police department.
- Tell your lawyer or adviser about your concern.
- Contact your local land registry office or the Director of Titles (see information on back panel).

Depending on your circumstances, you may also want to:

- Speak with someone at your bank.
- Contact Canada’s two national credit-reporting agencies (Equifax Canada and TransUnion Canada), and ask that a “fraud alert” be put on your credit report. Ask them to send you a copy for your review.