

Consumers in Ontario can also contact the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services' Consumer Protection Branch if they have questions, complaints or comments about work-at-home schemes. You can reach the branch by calling **416-326-8800** in the Greater Toronto Area or toll-free at **1-800-889-9768**.

Visit the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services' Consumer Protection Branch's website at www.ontario.ca/consumerprotection for information on topics such as:

- Cancelling a contract
- Identity theft – business
- Collection agencies
- Real estate fraud
- Telemarketing fraud
- Phoney charities – and more.

To find out about your rights as a consumer, how to file a complaint against a business and ways you can protect yourself in the marketplace, please contact:

Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services

Consumer Protection Branch
p | 416-326-8800 | 1-800-889-9768
e | consumer@ontario.ca
w | ontario.ca/consumerprotection

Order a free copy of our Smart Consumer Calendar at www.serviceontario.ca/publications or call **(416) 326-5300** in the Greater Toronto Area or toll-free at **1-800-668-9938**.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORK-AT-HOME SCHEMES



Smart consumers are
good for business.

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



What Are Work-at-Home Schemes?

Many people dream of owning a business and working from home seems like a great way to achieve this goal. You've probably seen advertisements in newspapers and magazines, on the internet and even on lamp posts – all promising quick and easy ways to earn money with just a little amount of work. Sound too good to be true? That's because it usually is.

What the ads fail to tell you is the many hours you may have to work without pay or the amount of money you may have to pay to buy supplies or equipment to do the job. Don't be lured into offers that promise big money for little effort and a minimal fee. These tend to be scams designed to rip you off.

Typical Work-At-Home Schemes

Here are some examples of common work-at-home scams:

Stuffing Envelopes

You see an ad for stuffing advertisements into envelopes. It seems like a great way to earn good money at home. But before hiring you to stuff advertisements into envelopes, you are asked to pay a fee. You're also told you'll only earn money if someone responds to the ads you helped to mail out. The chances of this happening are very low. The likely outcome is you will lose the money you paid for the fee – and have very little to show for it.

Craft Work

These companies will ask you to invest hundreds of dollars in equipment to complete crafts. Once you have the equipment, you spend time putting together crafts for a company that has promised to buy them from you once completed. You finish and present the crafts to the company. Unfortunately, the company rejects the goods and refuses to pay you for them because they don't measure up to the company's standards of quality. As a result, you've lost the time and money you invested.

Computer Work

You may see ads offering a lot of money to do data entry and word processing jobs from home. The catch is you're asked to pay a small fee. Once you pay the fee, you get a guide containing information about working from home and/or other information about setting up and running a home business. You may also receive a list of businesses to contact. If you try to contact any of the businesses, don't be surprised if they either don't exist or are uninterested in your services. On the off chance that a business is interested, the pay rate is very low.

While these are examples of how you can get scammed, there are companies that offer real and honest work-at-home opportunities. Do your homework – it can save you time, money and a lot of grief.

Quick Tips

If you are interested in working at home, keep these tips in mind:

- Carefully research the company to ensure that it is reputable.
- Ask for a list of references and check them carefully.
- Keep deposits to a minimum – about 10 per cent.
- Ensure all terms, conditions and promises are clearly stated in the written contract.
- Ask about the company's contract termination policy.
- Ask about the ongoing help the company will offer you – if any.
- Ask about refund policies and conditions that are attached to such policies.
- Ask about the company's policy on buying back assembled items, etc. and ensure all details are recorded in the contract.
- Find out whether the company is registered in Ontario.
- Find out if there is a procedure for settling disputes.
- Seek legal advice before signing a contract.
- If there is any training involved, find out if it is paid for by the company.
- Remember, if it sounds too good to be true – it usually is.