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Albertans warned lottery scam is a ticket to losing money

Edmonton... Albertans are advised not to reply to e-mails informing them they have won money from a group claiming to be the Alberta Lottery Fund & Prize America/Canadian Lottery Online Lucky Program.

“The bogus lottery scam has been around for years, but more recent versions appear to be taking a local twist,” said Heather Klimchuk, Minister of Service Alberta, responsible for consumer protection. “There is nothing legitimate about the e-mail. Just delete it. The scammers usually operate from overseas and if you send them money, it’s probably gone for good.”

An Albertan recently provided the government with an example of the e-mail congratulating the recipient for winning an US\$820,000 jackpot. The message references the department of Alberta Culture and Community Spirit.

The Alberta Lottery Fund provides financial support to community-based projects from provincial gaming revenue. It is not a lottery program that people can enter to win prizes.

People who contact the sender are asked to pay an administrative fee, tax or other nominal fee in order to collect their winnings. The scam operators often try to repeatedly persuade recipients to pay additional funds, promising that the prize is being processed.

Warning signs include the use of Internet e-mail addresses, such as Hotmail or Yahoo, and overseas phone numbers. Legitimate lotteries do not contact winners by e-mail, randomly select e-mail addresses to award prizes to, or ask winners to pay fees up front.

Albertans can learn more about spam e-mail scams from the Canadian Consumer Handbook at www.consumerhandbook.ca/en/topics/consumer-protection/spam. Service Alberta also provides tipsheets on a range of consumer topics at www.servicealberta.ca or by calling the Consumer Contact Centre toll-free at 1-877-427-4088.

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