

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
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Protect yourself when shopping online

I recently helped a constituent who was a victim of internet fraud involving Craigslist.

We forwarded her complaint to York Regional Police and encouraged her to file an internet fraud report with the RCMP through www.antifraudcentre.ca. She also requested that I help raise awareness of her story so that others may avoid becoming victims like her.

I appreciated her selflessness and am pleased to offer the following tips from www.GetCyberSafe.gc.ca to help you shop safely online. Remember, surfing safe means surfing smart!

When using online services such as PayPal, eBay and Craigslist, double check the web address to ensure you haven't been directed to a phishing scam (a way of attempting to get sensitive information by disguising as a trustworthy source).

Double check that the website address begins with <https://> (?s? is for ?secure?) and has a lock icon or unbroken key in the bottom right corner of the screen.

Pay by credit card if you can. Do not send cash.

Be on the lookout for prices that are too good to be true. They're likely counterfeits.

Don't use public Wi-Fi to shop online.

Read the privacy policy and find out how your information will be used.

Don't respond to an email or pop-up message that asks for financial information. Legitimate companies don't ask for this information this way.

Read your credit card statements and check for unauthorized charges.

Make sure your firewall is ?on?. For example, Windows Firewall is on by default on the latest version of Windows, but make sure it isn't turned off.

Don't allow auto fill for your passwords or personal information, like your address, and never allow a site to store your credit card information.

Open Government Data Portal ? Year 1

As the first year of Canada's Action Plan on Open Government draws to a close, the federal government is taking stock of Canada's progress in implementing the Year-1 deliverables of the plan.

The new Government Open Data Portal, www.data.gc.ca, provides Canadians with unprecedented access to government data and information. On June 18, 2013, in support of the Government of Canada's policy direction for open government, the Prime Minister formally announced Canada's adoption of the G8 Open Data Charter and committed to the proactive release of high-value data, and to setting standards for data quality, interoperability, and comparability.

Datasets already accessible to the public via the Portal include information in the areas of housing, health and the environment. More datasets will be accessible through the Portal as they become available.

The next-generation Open Data Portal will be based on leading-edge collaborative open source technologies, and will include new interactive features and search capabilities that will make finding and using government data easier and more user friendly.

The Government of Canada's commitment to Open Government and Open Data are in keeping with Canada's Open Government Action Plan, and Canada's participation in the Open Government Partnership, a global initiative to secure concrete commitments from member countries to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

To let us know how we are doing, please visit www.data.gc.ca.

Respect for Taxpayers

The Harper Government has demonstrated a firm commitment to support taxpayers in their dealings with the CRA by creating the

Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman in 2007. The office operates independently from the CRA and was established to uphold taxpayer service rights and to provide an impartial review of unresolved service complaints from taxpayers.

In June 2013, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the addition of a new right to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. Under the new right, if taxpayers lodge a service complaint or request a formal review, they can be confident that they will be treated impartially, receive the benefits, credits, and refunds to which they are entitled and pay no more and no less than what is required by law.

This new right reflects the government's commitment to taxpayer fairness and to further strengthen public confidence in the tax administration. It provides Canadians with added assurance that they can bring their concerns to the CRA and trust that they will be investigated fully and impartially.

For more information about the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman, go to www.taxpayersrights.gc.ca.

If you would like to contact me on any issue, please call 905-953-7515 or visit my website at www.loisbrown.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.