



## NBREA Warns Consumers of Online Scam Regarding Rental Properties

April 19, 2012

**Fredericton, NB – April 19, 2012. Consumers looking for property to rent should beware of a scam that involves rental properties posted to online classifieds sites and take steps to protect themselves against fraud.**

A scam has recently resurfaced that concerns property for sale being advertised as for rent on online classifieds sites such as Kijiji where property details, photos and the name of the REALTOR® listing the property has been copied from other sites. While this scam has been active across Canada, it has recently surfaced in the Fredericton and Moncton areas.

Carolyn Cameron, NBREA's Registrar, describes how the scam works: "The scammer impersonates the REALTOR® by using his or her name to respond to inquiries from prospective renters. The scammer is unavailable to meet the prospective renter in-person at the property and proposes that funds be forwarded to rent the property. The 'owner' will, in turn, make arrangements for someone to meet the renter at the property and hand over the keys. As you can imagine, no one shows up at the property to meet the renter.

"The risk for citizens falling victim to this type of scam becomes greater in markets where there are fewer rental vacancies or accommodations for particular needs like pet friendly properties," continued Cameron. "When demand is high and vacancies low, consumers may take greater risks to secure a rental situation – risk that they wouldn't necessarily otherwise take."

Consumers are advised, when using online classifieds websites to ensure all financial transactions take place locally and in person. Sites like Kijiji also provide safety guidance on using the service and maintain a list of common scams on their website. Consumers who wish to use this type of service to purchase anything are advised to review this information.

Background information of the scam is enclosed.

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### About the New Brunswick Real Estate Association

The New Brunswick Real Estate Association represents over 1,000 agents, salespeople and affiliate members throughout the province. NBREA serves its members through a wide variety of educational programs, publications and special services. The association also provides all real estate licensing courses in the province and co-regulates the industry with the Department of Justice. REALTOR® is a trademark, which identifies real estate professionals who are members of the Canadian Real Estate Association and, as such, subscribe to a high standard of professional service and to a strict code of ethics.



## Backgrounder Rental Property Scam

**Q. How prevalent is this scam?**

A. We're not sure. We know that this scam has been perpetrated in several provinces across Canada, but this is the first we've seen it occur in New Brunswick. We don't know the full extent of the problem and we've asked our members to report any instances that they find.

**Q. What sites are being used to run this scam?**

A. At this point, we only know of instances that have occurred with advertisements on Kijiji, but we feel it would be a mistake to assume that this scam is limited only to the Kijiji online classifieds site.

**Q. How are REALTORS® being implicated in this scam?**

A. When the scammers copy the property details and photos that have been legitimately posted to other sites, they are also capturing the name of the REALTOR® associated with the listing. They are then impersonating the REALTOR® - actually replying to emails in the REALTOR®'s name – when they respond to inquiries from prospective renters.

**Q. Can't you do something to prevent the scammers from copying the property information from other sites?**

A. Not really. It's almost impossible to prevent internet data copying and it becomes more challenging when you realize that many of these con artists are actually located outside our country. Our best bet is to alert our members and the consumer and advise on how consumers can protect themselves.

**Q. How does one protect oneself from falling victim to this type of fraud?**

A. In addition to creating awareness about this type of fraud, the best advice we can offer to the consumer is to ensure all financial transactions take place locally and in person.

**Q. Why is a provincial association of REALTORS® alerting consumers about a property rental scam?**

A. New Brunswick REALTORS® are concerned about protecting the consumers we serve, whether they are property renters or property owners. In this particular scam, REALTORS® are being implicated in the fraud. As professionals, we have an obligation to safeguard the integrity of our industry and, in doing so, take steps to help prevent consumers from being defrauded.

**Q. Do you have any actual example of the scam?**

A. Yes. We've removed the name of the REALTOR® the scammer impersonated but this illustrates how the scam was executed in NB earlier this month (see next page).



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### **Example of property rental advertisements on Kijiji:**

This beautiful New West End bungalow with open concept room

Date Listed: 14-Apr-12

Price: \$1,200

Bedrooms (#): 3 bedrooms

Bathrooms (#): 1 bathroom

For Rent By: Owner

Furnished: Yes

Pet Friendly: Yes

this beautiful New West End bungalow. The covered front entry welcomes you and upon entry you find an open concept living room and dining room with wood burning fireplace and hardwood floors under the carpet. The kitchen located at the heart of the home and accessible from the rear entry as well. The main floor is completed with the hardwood hall leading to 3 bedrooms and the family bath. Descend the staircase near the rear entry to the basement family room.

### **A potential renter replied to a similar advertisement and received the following response from the 'owner':**

Hello Dear

Thanks for your email response. my home is still available for rent \$1,100 Monthly which include utilities like hydro,heat,laundry facilities, WC.facilities Internet connection, air conditioning, alarm system etc..the kitchen is fully equipped with all necessary cooking utensils, refrigerator-freezer, four-hob and oven, microwave, dishwasher and washing machine, and i also want you to know that it was due to my work transfer that made me and my wife to leave the home with an intention of giving it out for rent. I am looking for a responsible person that can take very good care of it as we are not after the money for the rent but want the property to be kept clean all the time as it is our hard-earned property. If you are honestly interested and will absolutely maintain our property (Taking care of it like yours) as i hope i can put my trust and confidence in you presently,I earlier wanted to sale the home but had a second thought to rather put it up for rent, we are here in Africa doing the Lord's duty for humanity, for through our direct service to mankind, the blessings and promises of God will manifest today. The home vital informative documents and the entrance keys to my home is with us, we try to look for dependable agent to handle the rent but could not find one due to the limited time we had before leaving the country. Mostly we do not want our property to be given to any sort of person to avoid damages and troubles. I and my wife came over to Africa for a missionary work, so we hope you will be a good tenant which we've been praying to get.you can go ahead and view it exteriors at your earliest convinient time.



## Backgrounder Rental Property Scam

SO IF YOU ARE REALLY INTERESTED, FILL THE RENT APPLICATION FORM BELOW RENTAL APPLICATION DETAILS

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
MIDDLE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (WORK)  
PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ (CELL)  
PROFESSION: \_\_\_\_\_  
MARITAL STATUS: \_\_\_\_\_  
KIDS \_\_\_\_\_ (YES/NO), HOW MANY \_\_\_\_\_  
HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE LIVING \_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU HAVE A CAR \_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU HAVE A PET: \_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU SMOKE: \_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU DRINK: \_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU WORK LATE NIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_  
PRESENT ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY: \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_  
WHY ARE YOU LEAVING \_\_\_\_\_  
YOUR CURRENT RENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
WHEN DO YOU INTEND MOVING IN? \_\_\_\_\_  
IF THIS HOME IS BEING GIVEN TO YOU, HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND STAYING \_\_\_\_\_

Landing 22'1 "x 5'10" (6 .. 73m x 1.78m) Reception room 17'0 "x 16'0" (5.18m x 4.88m) Kitchen 13'0 "x 11'0" (3.96M x 3.35 m) Bedroom 12'10 "x 10'5" (3 .. 91M x 3.18M) Bathroom 6'10 "x 5'10" (2.08m x 1.78m) WC 5'0 "x 2'10" (1,52 m x 0,86 m).

looking forward to hear from you so that we can start commence on how to get the keys and document sent to you.

Thanks And Remain Bless.

### **Further information from the 'owner' on payment:**

Thanks very much for your reply and also i can see your willingness in this rent and how is work? Hope great!!! We are giving you our home, pls again take care of it .. Hope everything is fine with you. However, if you are ready to rent the home now that will not be a problem but we will advice you due to a responsible person like you.



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The deposit of one month which is \$1,100, so that the keys can be send to you and also we would like to send the following document to you via the DHL to the address you send to me and the tracking number will be sent to you so that you can possible occupy our home ,Pls once again,we are giving you this on trust and do not disapoint us and i promise you that you will love the place You are free to stay as long as you like.

So i am with the below document here with me and i will like to know whether you are ready for the payment of one month because i would be coming to check on you so that i can know how you take care of our home for us and if it is okay by you, i would collecting the next fee from you by myself.Here are the contents of the document.

- 1) Entrance and the rooms Keys
- 2)Paper/Permanent home form(Containing your reference details)
- 3)The home documentary file.
- 4)Payment Receipt.
- 5)Full address and description of the home.
- 6) Lease Agreement (for you to Sign).

So Let me know your decision so that i can send you information on how to make the payment asap and i want you to know that the payment will be made via Money gram or western union. Hope to read from you soonest..

Thanks Remain Bless.