



CONSUMER BULLETIN



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Free seminars could have hidden costs

Vancouver, BC – Chances are you may have received an invitation for a free seminar or conference that promises to reveal the latest ‘insider secrets’ on how to earn millions in commercial real estate with no experience required. The Better Business Bureau of Mainland BC and the BC Crime Prevention Association are teaming up to caution the public when attending so-called ‘free’ seminars.

“Consumers really have to think twice about attending these seminars because in the end they may be making a costly financial decision that they may later regret,” says Lynda Pasacreta, President and CEO of the Better Business Bureau of Mainland BC. “Seminar participants are often put under a lot of pressure to act quickly.”

In most cases the presenter will promote products and services that are for sale, such as self- improvement, investment education materials or business opportunities.

Presenters may promise to provide valuable “insider secrets” or information on how to operate a profitable business. Client testimonials are provided as proof of guaranteed success. Participants in these seminars are usually asked to pay thousands of dollars for training and materials.

“One of the oldest marketing ploys is to advertise something as ‘free’ when a product or service is being sold,” says Valerie MacLean, Executive Director of the B.C. Crime Prevention Association. “Consumers who invest in these opportunities frequently find that the returns are not as promised, and they cannot recoup the money they spent.”

Be on the lookout for the following red flags:

- Claims that you will earn a lot of money fast.
- There is no experience or training necessary.
- The program or business opportunity is available for a short time only; a classic example of high-pressure tactics.

To protect yourself be sure to:

- Research the company or individual beforehand on the Internet. To find a BBB reliability report on the company go to: www.bbbvan.org
- Take your time to make an informed decision.
- Do not feel pressured into buying or signing up for anything at the seminar.
- Be cautious about purchasing from seminar representatives who are reluctant to answer questions or who give evasive answers.

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