

# Bank employee accused of stealing from accounts

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Check your bank statements carefully, police say, after seniors in the GTA lost thousands of dollars in small amounts.

By **CURTIS RUSH** Staff Reporter  
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A former Toronto bank employee has been arrested after police say 31 seniors across Canada, including many in the GTA, were defrauded of almost \$206,000.

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce has reimbursed all the victims, but police say they haven't recovered any of the stolen money.

Police say the case involves unauthorized withdrawals from 43 different CIBC accounts between 2002 and 2007, when the suspect retired.

They allege that several clients' mailing addresses were changed to prevent the victims from receiving withdrawal notifications and bank statements through the mail.

The accused was a clerk processor who did not have day-to-day contact with her clients and was not a front-line employee, police say.

The fraud was "crafty" in that money was taken in small amounts to evade detection, Det. Const. Niki Laxamana said, noting that "there was nothing to raise red flags."

It wasn't CIBC that discovered the alleged fraud. It was one senior who alerted the bank to suspicious activity in one of her accounts, police say. The bank did an internal investigation and then approached police, who began their own investigation in January of 2010.

A spokesman for CIBC has not responded requests for information.

Investigators believe that a total of \$205,849.96 was taken from registered income funds, life income funds and registered savings plans.

The victims ranged in age from 60 to 85, and only seniors were targeted.

"It was very upsetting for seniors to find this out," Laxamana said. "These are people who are looking for ways to stretch their savings."

None of the seniors wanted to be identified. Police don't believe there are any more victims, and believe the alleged fraudster was acting alone.

Investigators will not say where they think the money ended up or how it was spent.

Alicia Canlas, 59, of Toronto, has been charged with fraud and laundering the proceeds of crime.

The accused is from the Philippines and was in the United States when a warrant was issued for her arrest. She came back to Toronto to turn herself in this week and made a court appearance Feb. 8. Her next court appearance is March 21.

Police advise bank customers to check their statements monthly, and to contact the bank about any discrepancies or missing statements.