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*Cross Canada survey on growing trend*

### **TWO OUT OF THREE CANADIANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IDENTITY THEFT**

### **SUMMER HOLIDAY PERIOD HOLDS PARTICULAR RISKS FOR TRAVELERS**

**Montreal, June 13, 2007** – The first edition of a cross-Canada survey on identity theft, conducted by SOM on behalf of Sigma Assistel, shows that two out of three Canadians are concerned about the identity theft trend, while four out of ten believe they will likely be victims of identity theft in the years ahead. “These results aren’t surprising, given the growing incidence of identity theft in North America. Fortunately, there are simple and accessible methods of protecting yourself from identity theft, particularly with summer vacation approaching, which carries its own set of risks,” says Louise Des Ormeaux, General Manager of Sigma Assistel.

The study found that 60% of Canadians have taken measures to protect themselves against identity theft. In fact, 45% of Canadians have purchased a shredder; 30% have had a home alarm system installed; 30% have rented a safety-deposit box from their financial institution; and 18% have made a serious effort to find out more about preventing identity theft.

The main reasons cited by those who have taken no action to guard against identity theft are: they don’t feel the need to (38%); they don’t know enough about it or how to protect themselves from it (28%); or they don’t think it’s possible to prevent it (18%).

“Nevertheless,” explains Martine Gervais, head of the identity theft assistance service at Sigma Assistel, “there are a variety of basic measures that citizens and consumers can take to significantly reduce the risk of becoming a victim of identity theft. The first of these measures is to be aware that this danger exists and that it isn’t something that just happens to other people. Public awareness will help limit risky behavior.” Other basic recommendations are:

- Never answer requests to confirm your PIN number, credit card numbers, social insurance number, driver's license (etc.) by telephone or e-mail, unless you initiated the request.
- Collect your mail every day. Your mail contains a great deal of personal information, and fraudsters know this well;
- Use a shredder to destroy all of your personal documents;
- Do not do business over the Internet with unknown companies;
- Use a credit card that with a low credit limit when making online purchases.

During the summer holiday period, additional measures should also be considered:

- Arrange for your mail to be collected the entire time you are away. Ask a trusted neighbor, friend or family member to pass by regularly to gather your mail;
- When traveling, use just one credit card to keep risks to a minimum. Retain all of your receipts in order to conduct a reconciliation when you return home;
- Never leave your passport at a hotel front desk or with a tour operator. Providing your passport number is sufficient;
- If you are traveling by car, never leave your identification documents or credit cards in the glove compartment or trunk.

In addition, there are anti-identity theft assistance services that can help Canadians better protect themselves against this situation. As well as helping to prevent this crime, these services will accompany identity theft victims as they work to minimize the impact of the theft and/or recover their identities quickly and safely. However, the survey revealed that only 6% of the population is aware of these services and only 1% have access to them or have already subscribed to them.

## **Identity theft facts and figures**

The survey conducted with Canadians about identity theft also revealed that:

- Close to one in 15 Canadians (7%) has already been a victim of identity theft, and nearly one in six Canadians (16%) knows someone who has been a victim.
- In the event of identity theft, almost all Canadians would contact their police department (95%) or financial institution (93%), which is a completely valid action to take. Close to three-quarters (71%) would contact their home or life and health insurer, and more than half (57%) would contact their alarm system provider.

- Most Canadians (59%) would prefer for the organization they turn to for help in case of identity theft to act on their behalf, while 28% of respondents believe that the organization should provide them with all the necessary information so that they can take action themselves (13% of respondents would like to see a combination of these two approaches).

In addition, according to the data compiled by the Phone Busters call centre, identity theft 7,778 Canadians were victims of identity theft in 2006 and the related losses totaled \$16.3 million.

The cross-Canada survey was conducted by SOM on behalf of Sigma Assistel via 1,510 interviews. This sample provides results with a maximum margin of error of 2.6%, 19 times out of 20.

### **About Sigma Assistel**

Sigma Assistel, a Canadian leader in telephone assistance and a subsidiary of Desjardins Financial Security, serves more than 5 million Canadians today. The company's growth for the last two years has been 21% and 20%. The company strives to offer cost-competitive solutions to meet the needs of groups, businesses, and organizations concerned about the well-being of their employees, members, and clients. Sigma Assistel is committed to providing appropriate, high-quality assistance services – anytime and anywhere, no matter what the nature of the request. These services available 24/7 include Health Assistance, Legal Assistance, Home Assistance, Travel Assistance, Roadside Assistance, as well as ID Theft Assistance and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

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