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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS WARN CONSUMERS ABOUT ONLINE RENTAL SCAMS

The Saskatchewan REALTORS® Association (SRA), Saskatchewan Landlord Association (SKLA) and the Better Business Bureau of Saskatchewan (BBB) are cautioning consumers and rental housing providers regarding the increasing frequency of online rental scams.

Online scams may occur when a scammer impersonates a rental housing provider, copies photos from reputable housing platforms, republish the photos, and then attempts to rent the unit to unsuspecting victims. The rental housing provider will promise keys and access to the unit, in exchange for an e-transfer of a security deposit, rent, or both. Once the transfer has occurred, the fraudulent rental housing provider disappears and, in many cases, the victim doesn't receive any access to the property. In extreme cases, the fraudulent rental housing provider has arranged an appointment with a locksmith for the tenant to gain access to the property using an illegitimate rental agreement.

"Fraudsters are becoming increasingly savvy and capitalizing on inventory challenges in both the resale and rental markets," said SRA CEO, Chris Guerette. "In some cases, rental advertisements use photos from active MLS® listings and we are urging prospective renters to ensure the property in question is not an active home on the resale market."

"The rental market is experiencing higher rents and strong demand, which makes it an opportune time for scammers to take advantage of prospective tenants," said SKLA CEO, Cameron Choquette. "As the voice of landlords in Saskatchewan, we caution tenants to ensure they take the time to know who they are dealing with. If a property seems too good to be true and you're being asked for money upfront, it could be a red flag to investigate further."

"Scammers shift their tactics constantly and appear to have increased their usage to perpetrate fraud," said BBB CEO, Karen Smith. "Remember to check out legitimate companies on BBB.org and, if possible, take time to find a company with a solid reputation. Read BBB's most recent report on rental scams by visiting BBB.org/scamtracker and sign up for scam alerts to increase your protection."

Given the significant negative impacts on the housing industry, we urge consumers and locksmiths across the province to remain vigilant and consider the following best practices:

- Never send money to a rental housing provider until you have viewed the property and signed a tenancy agreement.

- Connect with the rental housing provider by phone or in-person to ensure they are legitimate, and that the property is, in fact, available for rent.
- A legitimate rental housing provider will be transparent about the application and rental process - don't be afraid to ask questions.

For more information:

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