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The following is information sent to Near North District School Board (NNDSB) by the Ministry of Education, to be shared with our families:

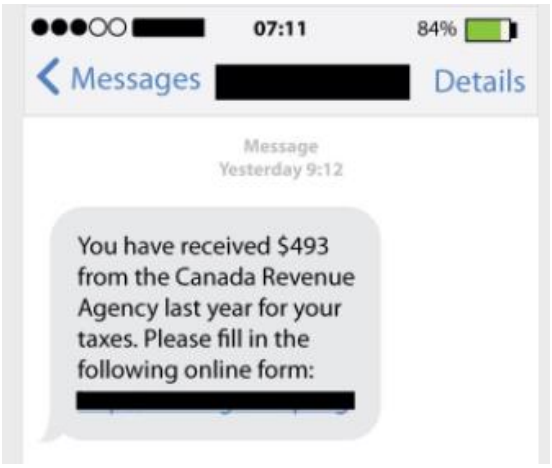
With phishing scams on the rise, student and parents are asked to exercise heightened awareness to avoid being victims of cyber-crime.

While most phishing attempts come by email, phishing can also come by other means. Phishing text messages (also known as SMS phishing or smishing) are fraudulent text messages, sent by cyber criminals, to try to lure victims into revealing personal or financial information to commit fraud or steal sensitive information or to click links that will install malware used to steal data and damage networks. These messages can arrive by SMS, iMessage, social media platforms, and other messaging platforms.

Phishing text / email messages are disguised to look like they are sent from a trustworthy organization or reputable person. Always use caution before responding to requests for information.

How it works:
Phishing scams typically use a threat or opportunity to encourage you to click a link or call a number. Financial incentives, including government payments and rebates, contests, prizes and giveaways are often part of the lure used by cyber criminals, as well as threats such as legal action, overdue payments or missed deliveries.

In the example below, the smishing screenshot is impersonating a Canada Revenue Agency payment. However, the cyber criminal is attempting to steal the information or infect the device of the user who clicks the link.



Tips to protect yourself:

- **Do not reply to the text message, do not call the number, do not click on any links in the message.** Clicking a link could give cyber criminals access to your information.

- **Do a web search of the phone number and message.** Chances are you are not the first person to receive this message.

- **Contact the organization directly to inquire about the message you've received.** If you believe the message is a scam, contact the organization through their official customer service number to inquire about the message. If they confirm it is not from them, delete the message.

If you think that you may have been a victim of phishing:

- **Change your passwords.**

- **Report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre** toll free at 1-888-495-8501. Visit the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre's What to do if you're a Victim of Fraud page for more information.

- **Report the incident to your local police.**
  Do your part to block cyber-attacks. Remember to persistently practice S.E.A. – Slow down, Examine carefully and Act cautiously.

Other helpful resources:

- How (and what) to teach your kids about phishing
- Video: Smishing and how to protest yourself
- The 7 red flags of phishing
- Workbook for kids (Game 4 – Phishing)
- Teach your kids how to avoid online scams