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## CONSUMER ALERT

May 3, 2016

### **Attempts to sell your own property online may be targeted by unlicensed operators**

The Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate is warning homeowners who advertise their own properties for sale online that they may be approached and offered real estate services by individuals who are not licensed to provide those services under the *Real Estate Services Act* (Act).

For example, homeowners advertising their own properties using free online classified advertising services such as Kijiji, Craigslist, Castanet, Prop2Go, and OKHomeSeller have been offered assistance by unlicensed individuals in marketing the property, arranging viewings, and reaching potential purchasers. The unlicensed activities are known to have targeted the Okanagan region.

The unlicensed real estate services have also been promoted through websites including canadapropertyguys.com, commissionfreesystems.com, ispeedprivatelending.com, and realestatecouncilofcanada.ca. The Real Estate Council of Canada is not a government office or regulatory body. These websites and related parties are the subjects of an application by the Real Estate Council of Alberta for a civil court injunction to halt unlicensed real estate services. A hearing is scheduled in the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta on June 7, 2016.

Unlicensed real estate services providers may charge opportunistic fees and commissions, and expose consumers to other forms of misconduct. They are not required to carry errors and omissions insurance, manage funds through trust accounts, meet educational and professional standards, and are not subject to regulatory oversight by the Real Estate Council of British Columbia.

### **Protect Yourself**

**Ask questions.** Seek information from potential purchasers, including their full names and contact information.

**Do Your Research.** Before working with a real estate services provider, check whether they are licensed by visiting the [Real Estate Council of British Columbia's website](#).

**Check Online Ads.** Ensure that your online for-sale-by-owner advertisement and pictures have not been copied into another marketing website to divert potential purchasers to an unlicensed broker.

**Be Vigilant.** Consumers are encouraged to report improper advertisements to the website host and suspected unlicensed real estate services to the Office of the Superintendent of Real Estate (604-660-3555, 1-866-206-3030, [RealEstate@ficombc.ca](mailto:RealEstate@ficombc.ca)).