

Canadian Taxpayers Have Left C \$1.4 Billion on the Table

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The Canada Revenue Agency has issued C \$1.4 billion in checks that have never been cashed and is urging taxpayers to look into whether they might be beneficiaries of undiscovered funds.

Almost nine million checks worth an average amount of C \$158 were outstanding and uncashed as of May 2022 — some dating back to 1998, the CRA said in an August 8 [announcement](#). Misplaced payments and changes in taxpayers' addresses are likely to blame for some of the unclaimed refund and benefits checks, it said, adding that checks from the government never expire and the originals can't be voided without an express taxpayer request.

The CRA has embarked on an initiative to inform taxpayers of their outstanding funds, which has already led to the redemption of C \$802 million in checks between February 2020 and May 2022, the agency said. It's planning more outreach and will send 75,000 emails by May 2023 — including 25,000 in August — concerning federal and provincial child benefit programs, goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax credits, and Alberta energy tax refunds, it said.

"This money belongs to Canadians and we want to help them reclaim these funds," said CRA spokeswoman Breanne Stephenson. The agency encouraged taxpayers to sign on to the CRA's My Account portal or register for direct deposit to make sure they don't miss payments.

But many taxpayers are wary about giving the CRA easy access to their banking information, said Kim Moody of Moodys Tax Law. Moody said his firm often has issues with misplaced CRA checks and refunds but that they are usually resolvable — albeit with some long hold times.

While a large balance of unclaimed refunds isn't surprising, given the size of the CRA, the steps the agency is taking to make sure taxpayers are aware of the outstanding amounts are impressive, Moody said.

Roy A. Berg of Roy A. Berg Professional Corp. also said he was unsurprised by the announcement. "Notwithstanding the byzantine portal, the CRA has been hacked numerous times . . . and has blocked portal access to hundreds of thousands of Canadian taxpayers," he said.

The CRA announced in March 2021 that 800,000 taxpayer accounts were affected by potential [third-party access to credentials](#) less than a year after [cyberattacks](#) affecting almost 49,000 accounts caused account revocations and suspension of services. As a result of blocked accounts, the CRA has issued physical refunds and benefits checks to affected taxpayers, Berg said.

