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Please accept the following essay for consideration in the Sidney Bloxom Scholarships Competition.

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## **Modern Trends in Economic Crime**

In today's society, many forms of economic fraud occur on a daily basis. These current-day crime trends cover a wide range of affairs, from charity fraud to auto-dealer scams. The diversity within this crime could target virtually anyone. However, each and every crime has the same purpose: profit, man-made power. As long as the pseudo can get it and get away with it, it doesn't matter how the money is obtained.

Victims of economic fraud are devastated by the effects, and yet, there is often nothing they can do to repair the damage. This is precisely the reason people get into economic crimes - a low failure rate compared to the achievement rate. After all, we don't hear about a new crime trend until someone has gotten away with it enough times for word to spread.

In this vast field of fraudulency, one of the most abject is the charity sham. Testifying for causes such as diabetes, cancer, children's hospitals, and the handicapped, these sweet-talkers can make a sizable dollar. They can provoke their victims to donate a generous amount of money to what appears to be a sincere charity. These underhand profits are collected as the imposters walk from door to door or call over the phone, like many real charity agents. And people give. Who could lie about such things, right? Charity fraud is presently on the rise.

Another sham is the ATM fraud, referred to as the "Lebanese Loop" by the media. An imposter will insert this "loop" into an ATM machine to preclude proper performance, so that when the next customer comes in to complete a transaction, it will not work properly. Trapping the card in the ATM, the "loop" allows the pseudo to go ahead and aid the frustrated customer. Predictably and without fail, as the fraud tells the customer what to do, they'll advise the person to tap in their pin number and watch as they do so. If the customer gives up and walks away, the

criminal is able to remove the “loop” and eject the card for their own use.

Another sham like this one is called “skimming.” The fraud, in this case, happens to be a cashier at a retail store, and the victims often don’t realize they’ve been exploited until mysterious transactions begin showing up on their bank statements. Considered a form of counterfeiting, “skimming” is carried out when the criminal sweeps a customer’s payment card through a hidden card reader. Information from the card’s magnetic strip will be recorded by the secret reader. This transcript allows the imposter to forge a counterfeit card and access money from their victim’s account.

We’ve all heard about auto-dealer scams, and are wary of them when we purchase used vehicles. They are a relatively common occurrence in Canada. Here are two examples of things dealerships do to get more money for a useless or even dangerous automobile.

Price stuffing is just what it sounds like - charges that are added to a vehicle by the dealer that should never be in the contract at all. Victims who’ve been used like this won’t get to see this information as such, because it is squeezed or “stuffed” into financing records and fine print. Some dealers just plain lie about the vehicle, stating to their clients that the automobile in question had never been in a crash or never had any of the original features rendered or supplanted.

Rolling back the odometer in a vehicle to increase its price is the second example of auto-dealer fraud. This is a serious infraction, and violators can, and have, been prosecuted. If a fraud knows how to do it, the odometer can be changed in just ten minutes.

One type of fraud that is easy to get involved in and get away with is home construction or repair fraud. These criminals move from place to place, escaping with as many dollars as they

can before the public becomes leery and catches on, and typically target the older, more vulnerable customers. So what else do they take besides cash? People's well-being. False contractors like these may do the jobs poorly, for a suspiciously low price, never finish it, or just don't do it. Victims of this fraud find themselves at a dead end. They've no way to get their money back.

A final, modern day crime trend related to economics is carried out by employees who've worked for a business for an adequate amount of time to know how that particular occupation works, and they have gained a healthy status. With this knowledge and position, the employee uses it egotistically for their own unlawful profit. This is called embezzlement, a form of theft. Stating that they will promptly return each cent, the fraud will be lent some money by the business. After a while and according to plan, however, the felon will not be able to ante up. Because of their status within the business, the employer eventually may begin to feel like they could not run the business without this employee, and they are stuck. The embezzler now has gained a lot of power.

This essay contains just a handful of the diverse economic crimes occurring in today's society, all for profit. And although they happen without any violence, the outcomes are just as devastating to the victim.

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