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Deceived at close range of $400,000: a retiree from Shawinigan believed he was in relationship with Lara Fabian

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Later

Targeted by online scammers, Gérald Trahan was convinced that the popular singer

was preparing to divorce her husband for him

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DENIS THERRIAULT

Thursday, December 4, 2025 00:00
UPDATE Thursday, December 4, 2025 00:00

A Shawinigan man reportedly lost some $400,000 in a sophisticated scam, believing he was handing the money over to popular singer Lara Fabian, who claimed she was ready to leave her husband for him.

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More and more scammers are now impersonating celebrities online in order to

to swindle large sums of money from their victims. One of the most famous cases is that of a French woman who fell in love with a fake Brad Pitt.

a scam that cost him more
of one million dollars, two
years.

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In Quebec, a retiree fell
in the same panel, he who
mistakenly believed that he was in the process of
develop a relationship
in love with Lara Fabian, on
the web.

In an interview given to
the show I , Gerald Trahan
claims to have lost nearly 400
$000 in this scam.

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The 68-year-old man is a huge fan

of Lara Fabian since he saw her perform in

Mauricie in 1994.

He was then able to meet her.

Since then, he has followed his
career closely. He attributes to him

Mentions, likes, and comments

majority of the singer's social media posts

social.



Everything suggests that this is what attracted the attention of

Scammers, who allegedly targeted him. In

the fall of 2023, a fake Lara Fabian

allegedly

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contacted via social media.

"I was chatting with her for a little while.
"A few lines," he recalls.

The fake Lara quickly invited him
on Telegram, an app known for its privacy
settings. The discussions then
reportedly began...

intensified.

"At one point, it was like a thunderbolt
struck," he confides.

Very quickly, the fake Lara made numerous
requests for money for all sorts of reasons,
the amounts of which varied from

from a few hundred dollars to $150,000
(see box below).

Unable to refuse

Madly in love, the retiree was incapable
of refusing her anything.

That is. In 18 months, he emptied his bank accounts and savings, in addition to going into debt to meet her demands.

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But in the spring of 2025, Gérald Trahan begins to realize that he may be the victim of a scam. He discusses the situation, particularly with his niece Jacinthe.

Gélinas, who immediately realizes the deception.

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"He was in love. It made him feel good. It was his reason for being to live for 18 months. So, he didn't want to hear what we had to say. He got angry. He often quarreled with friends

"Regarding that. We all tried to tell him," his niece recalls.



Mr. Trahan finally saw reason. Jacinthe Gélinas helped him to

to get out of this mess. She accompanied him in his dealings with financial institutions to settle the outstanding balances on the loans, lines of credit, and credit cards used to pay the scammers. She doesn't understand why the financial institutions aren't

did not intervene.

"There are transactions taking place, transfers taking place, and these are strange addresses.

"How come... there's no stop sign?" she asks.

Today, Gérald Trahan has lost everything. He had to sell his house of the last 40 years to pay off his debts.

"I have nothing left. I'm ruined. Completely ruined," he concluded.

THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS PAID IN 18 MONTH

Here are some examples of sums paid by Gérald Trahan as part of this scam:

- The retiree sent $15,000 to the fake Lara Fabian, who claimed to need funds to care for children placed in an orphanage in Paris;

- At another time, the fake Lara Fabian begs her new lover to buy her a $6000 piano, so that she has an instrument in her Paris apartment that comes "from him";

- The fraudsters are asking for a another $15,000 to finance the making of the album I am there, which was finally released in November 2024;

- While the relationship is well underway, the fake Lara announces to Gerald Trahan She told him she wanted a divorce and invited him to come live with her in Paris. is asking for $150,000 to help him

to pay his lawyer's fees.

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THREE POTENTIALS SUSPECTS IN THE POLICE BULLETS

Three individuals who are believed to be involved in the fraud of which Gérald Trahan claims to be a victim have been unmasked thanks to the work of a French company that hunts down web scammers.

Find my Scammer is a Paris-based organization founded by Marwan Ouarab, a former fraudster who paid his debt to society and now works in cybersecurity.



He also contributed to identify scammers who may have maintained a relationship virtual for 16 months with the French woman tricked on social media by a fake Brad Pitt.

At the request of the program, Mr. I , Ouarab looked into the case of Gérald Trahan and three people who could be behind this scam were quickly identified.

The organization produced an investigation report, which we were able to consult. This document was handed over to the Sûreté du Québec, which is investigating this matter.

Vulnerable victims

According to cybercrime experts, fake celebrity accounts target a specific type of victim. These victims are often

"desperate" and have a "love

"very strong" for a public figure, explains Simon Marchand, an independent expert in fraud prevention.



Scammers choose their victims by analyzing their online activity on the pages of celebrity artists, explains Safae Wahdani, a cybersecurity analyst at the University of Montreal's Cybercrime Clinic. The fraudster then manipulates their victim to build a relationship, sometimes lasting months, in order to gain their trust and extract money.



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These fraudsters can reach a "near-industrial level in their operations," adds Simon Marchand.

"The con artist who is going to have a conversation with

"He will be able to do this with a chatbot, which will be able to emulate the conversation, replicate the scenarios, and apply them," he explains.

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