

# Royal Mint said it has been alerted to 'suspected toonie counterfeit'

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A new rash of alleged counterfeit toonies can be identified by a split front right paw, according to Quinte West based coin expert Mike Marshall. DEREK BALDWIN jpg, BI

The Royal Canadian Mint says it is aware of an unconfirmed complaint that a new rash of counterfeit toonies are circulating in the country's money system.

Following a news report in *The Intelligencer*, the Mint said it was first informed of possible counterfeit toonies in mid-February and is looking into the matter.

Michelle Richardson, director of communications and public relations, told the newspaper the "Mint was alerted to a suspected counterfeit toonie by a coin collector on February 10. We have an established process for assisting law enforcement investigations into suspected coin counterfeiting."

“As part of that process, the Mint needs to examine suspect coins before determining whether or not they are counterfeit. No one else in Canada has that capability,” Richardson said. “The Mint has not yet received a specimen of the suspected fraudulent coin.”

Richardson said the Mint has built security features into its coins.

“Coin counterfeiting is rare in Canada. Because it is a risk facing all manufacturers of high-value coins, we proactively applied robust security features to our \$1 and \$2 circulation coins in 2012,” Richardson said.

“The complexity of these security features makes it extremely difficult and cost-prohibitive to accurately duplicate modern \$1 and \$2 coin, which are known throughout the minting industry as the most secure circulation coins in the world.”

Richardson’s response to The Intelligencer comes after Mike Marshall, a Canadian coin expert, said a new wave of faux toonies are infiltrating the Canadian money market.

A nationally-known authority in numismatics – collecting of paper money and coins – in Canada, Marshall said the fake toonies are believed to have appeared in November of last year and are now in circulation.

A retired Canadian Forces air traffic controller and Quinte West resident, Marshall gives seminars on spotting fakes at coin expositions and stamp shows and has been featured in a slew of news and magazine articles.

Marshall said the latest wave of fake toonies are popping up in cash registers of unwitting Quinte grocery stores, convenience stores, coin-operated car washes and in rolls of toonies distributed by local banks.

The Intelligencer met Marshall earlier this week morning after a visit to a bank where he exchanged paper cash for six rolls of 25 toonies, three of which turned out to be fakes.

“There is a lot of them. For them to appear with this regularity, you saw the test today. The first coin in one of the rolls when I came out of the bank, there it is. It is a lot,” he said.

After conversations with coin collectors across Canada he has known for almost 30 years, Marshall surmises anywhere from two to three per cent of toonies now in distribution are likely counterfeit as supported by the coins issued by the Trenton bank.

The fakes he said can be most easily identified by a split in the polar bear’s right paw.

“The biggest tell of all five dates is the polar bear’s front right foot. It’s toes are physically splayed, split. Once you see one, it jumps right out at you,” he said, adding in the real toonie, the “four toes are all in side by each.”