Toronto Police Service IT Infrastructure: Cyber Security Assessment Phase 1

Date: June 23, 2021
To: Audit Committee
From: Auditor General
Wards: All

SUMMARY

In a December 12, 2019 letter to the Auditor General, the Toronto Police Services Board requested the Auditor General to conduct a cybersecurity audit. Given the size and importance of Toronto Police Service (TPS) and the sensitivity of the information it retains, the Auditor General prioritized the allocation of resources on the request and agreed to perform a vulnerability assessment and penetration testing of the TPS IT network, systems and applications.

We have completed Phase 1 of this review. The purpose of Phase 1 was to assess TPS's ability, as a critical City agency, to effectively manage external and internal cybersecurity threats. A Phase 2 review will be conducted in the future to review systems that were excluded from this current review.

The public report with a confidential attachment is tabled at the June 24, 2021 TPS Board meeting. The agenda for the meeting and the report are available at:

https://tpsb.ca/component/jdownloads/send/32-agendas/694-2021-06-24-agenda

The Auditor General has made a recommendation to the Board to forward the report to Council through the Audit Committee.

A decision document will be forwarded to the Audit Committee by the TPS Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact related to this report.

DECISION HISTORY

Considering the importance of cybersecurity with respect to the confidentiality of the TPS data and IT network and systems, the Board requested the Auditor General in December 2019 to conduct a cybersecurity audit at TPS.

The Auditor General had prioritized this review in 2020 but the project was delayed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Phase 1 has now been completed and Phase 2 will be included in the future Auditor General's Work Plan. The 2021 Audit Work Plan is available at:

https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/au/bgrd/backgroundfile-158178.pdf

This review is part of the Auditor General's overall plan to expedite the reviews of IT security systems throughout the City and its major Agencies and Corporations.

COMMENTS

With cyber threats evolving, there is an urgent need for all City of Toronto organizations, including TPS, to ensure cybersecurity programs are effective in providing robust security controls to protect TPS's information assets against evolving cyber threats. A system is only as strong as its weakest link.

Cyberattacks on government organizations including municipalities and law enforcement agencies are on the rise. A New York Times article[1] outlined how more than 40 municipalities in the U.S. – including large cities like Baltimore and Atlanta – have been hit by ransomware attacks.

With the level of services, the extent of personal and highly sensitive data, and the critical infrastructure the organization supports, the Toronto Police Service should do all it can to protect its systems against cyberattacks and to adapt to emerging threats.

The procedures and work performed in relation to this report does not constitute an audit conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). However, we believe we have performed sufficient work in satisfaction that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.

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1 *Ransomware Attacks Are Testing Resolve of Cities Across America*, August 22, 2019, The New York Times

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SIGNATURE

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