

## **Auditor General's Cybersecurity Review: Toronto Fire Services Critical Systems Review**

**Date:** October 25, 2021

**To:** Audit Committee

**From:** Auditor General

**Wards:** All

### **REASON FOR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

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The Confidential Attachment 1 to this report involves the security of the property of the City of Toronto or one of its agencies and corporations.

### **SUMMARY**

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Cyberattacks are widely considered to be one of the most critical operational risks facing organizations.

This Phase 1 report includes the results of a review of critical systems in Toronto Fire Services (TFS).

This report contains two administrative recommendations. The confidential findings and recommendations from our review are contained in Confidential Attachment 1.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Auditor General recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the confidential instructions to staff in Confidential Attachment 1 to this report from the Auditor General.
2. City Council direct that Confidential Attachment 1 to this report from the Auditor General be released publicly at the discretion of the Auditor General, after discussions with the appropriate City Officials.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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Implementing the cybersecurity audit recommendations will strengthen cybersecurity controls at the City. The extent of costs and resources needed to implement the recommendations is not determinable at this time. The investment needed to improve controls to manage and respond to cyber threats offsets the potentially significant costs that could result from security breaches, which could include data recovery/cleanup, financial loss, reputational damage, fines or litigation.

## DECISION HISTORY

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The Auditor General has conducted several cybersecurity audits at the City. Her 2021 Work Plan includes cybersecurity audits of the City's critical infrastructure as well as its agencies and corporations. The Auditor General's 2021 Work Plan is available at:

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

## COMMENTS

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Evolving cyberattacks are a reality of the world we live in. Cyberattacks are unauthorized attempts (successful or not) to gain access to a system and confidential data, modify it in some way, or delete or render information in the system unusable. These are one of the biggest threats facing organizations today.

According to the Canada's National Cyber Threat Assessment, 2020<sup>1</sup>:

*"...cybercrime remains the most common threat faced by Canadian organizations of all sizes... Over the past two years, targeting of industrial processes and ransomware attacks have become regular occurrences resulting in major impacts, including reputational damage, productivity loss, legal repercussions, recovery expenses, and damage to infrastructure and operations. We assess that ransomware directed against Canada in the next two years will almost certainly continue to target large enterprises and critical infrastructure providers."*

Toronto Fire Services (TFS) provides essential services to millions of Torontonians by responding to emergency calls related to fires, illnesses, accidents and many other hazards. TFS is the largest fire service in Canada, and the fifth largest in North America.

As cybersecurity threats expand and evolve, it is important that the Auditor General continue her work on cybersecurity and making recommendations to improve the security of critical systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cyber.gc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/ncta-2020-e-web.pdf>

In her review of selected TFS critical systems, the Auditor General has made eight confidential recommendations in Confidential Attachment 1 and one recommendation in a separate management letter. The Auditor General will re-test cybersecurity controls after management has implemented the recommendations.

The procedures and work performed for this report do not constitute an audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). However, we believe the work performed and information gathered provide a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CONTACT**

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Syed Ali, Audit Director, IT and Strategy, Auditor General's Office  
Tel: 416 392-8438, Fax: 416-392-3754, E-mail: [Syed.Ali@toronto.ca](mailto:Syed.Ali@toronto.ca)

Gawah Mark, Senior Audit Manager, Auditor General's Office  
Tel: 416-392-8439, Fax 416 392-3754, E-mail: [Gawah.Mark@toronto.ca](mailto:Gawah.Mark@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Beverly Romeo-Beehler  
Auditor General

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Confidential Attachment 1: Auditor General's Cybersecurity Review: Toronto Fire Services Critical Systems Review