

EDITORIAL

Cyber wake up call

The massive hack at southwestern Ontario hospitals should be a wake up call to government and citizens alike.

Oct. 23, a ransomware gang - Daixin - hacked into the server at TransForm Services. It's a non-profit organization which does provides accounting, supply and IT services for hospitals and health care organizations in the region. Daixin froze up all the computers connected to TransForm and demanded a ransom to reopen it. Computer security experts hailed the health care organizations for not paying. There was no guarantee that ponying up would have kept things like personal health information, social insurance numbers and payroll information from making it to the dark web. As it stands now, the entire computer network is being rebuilt.

But the damage extends far beyond just computers. Literally thousands of patients' data - including nearly 270,000 who used Bluewater Health hospitals in Sarnia and Petrolia - is floating around the dark web. People can scoop it up to secure fake IDs. Criminals can use the more sensitive information - much of which the patients wanted no one but their doctors to know - to extort people.

And of course, the health care institutions reputations are tarnished as well; they are the protectors of this sensitive data and it's very clear they failed to protect it.

The fact is public institutions rarely spend what they should to protect sensitive personal and health information. If it is a choice between spending millions on cyber security or health care, many people would say pump that money into more surgeries or family doctors. That's understandable.

But, without that layer of solid cyber security, money which should have been bound for health care will eventually be used recover from a hack.

And there is the human costs of this cyber attack; long awaited surgeries, CT Scans and appointments delayed at a time when waiting lists which ballooned during the pandemic were becoming more manageable. It's a big price to pay.

We urge both the federal and provincial governments to do more about cyber security than just pass manifestoes saying they won't pay ransom for data. They need to provide adequate funding to secure our private information. Because governments haven't, that duty is now in the hands employees and patients. And they'll have to be vigilant. Hackers don't care who you are or what your medical needs say - they're looking for cash. In this case, it seems, the door to the information they needed to get it was wide open.

We need governments to step forward to shut that door and make sure it is locked tight, even if it is too late for thousands in southwestern Ontario.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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OUR STORY



DAVID MCLEAN PHOTO

This photo George Ladell (1868-1940), and his brother Will Ladell (1869-1955) seated atop their meat delivery wagon in 1898 out front of the Central Hotel in Wyoming. The brothers had a butcher shop in the village at the time. Will later moved to Winnipeg, while George, who also farmed in Warwick, Enniskillen and Plympton Townships at various times, moved to Forest where he operated a butcher shop.

The beginning of change at the public school board

What a damning report. "Nepotism and favouritism impact hiring and advancement" and are "pervasive."

Indigenous teachers "perpetually seen as outsiders" wherever they go.

That's just some of the things a consultant, hired by the Lambton-Kent District School Board to complete an equity report, found after talking with about 20 per cent of the 3,000 plus education workers.

Employees told the consultant of working along side the children of senior administrators, knowing they had been hired because of who their parents are.

They told the consultants that the public board had a reputation for nepotism and favouritism.

Indigenous people who advanced in their careers said they were taught more about building relationships with coworkers than trained - something that didn't help them much because they didn't travel in the same circles as managers.

Over the years, I've heard friends talk about being on the supply list at the Lambton public board for long periods of time. That's changed somewhat because of aging teachers are retiring. But, if you walk into your local school, my guess is you'll still see mostly white faces at the front of the classroom even as more of the students in the seats are immigrants or Indigenous.

The consultants gave the board some pretty blunt advice; change

your hiring practices.

"Those involved in the hiring process must be supported to recognize and mitigate their unconscious biases and to understand the value that diversity brings to the workplace and to students," the consultant says adding they need tools including "policies to ensure that hiring is not based on who you know, but rather what you know."

It will be a long road to do that, but hopefully bringing the issue to the light will be the beginning of change.



Heather Wright

THE INDEPENDENT

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