

City investigating compromised emails; patches, protections, and safeguards installed to halt malicious activity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Welland, ON – The City of Welland Information Services (IS) department – handling all technology issues – was recently made aware of suspicious emails received by the public from City email accounts.

On December 7, 2021, IS detected unauthorized email access, which led to the later discovery of a cyber breach. No other systems were affected. Since December 14, 2021, there has been no malicious activity within City systems, and IS has installed further protections.

A small percentage of emails were stored on the compromised server. In addition, the outside parties responsible for the breach were also able to send emails from the accounts they accessed.

“As soon as we found out about this breach, we began working on a solution,” said CAO Steve Zorbas. “The privacy and integrity of sensitive information is a number-one priority, and we are taking every action to mitigate the risk and enhance the security of our servers. In addition, we are taking the required steps to mitigate this possible privacy breach in accordance with *the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and reviewing our processes to ensure these types of breaches do not occur.”

It is uncertain as to the precise action causing the breach, and outside cyber security consultants have been retained to review the situation and assess the impacts of the breach. Though not confirmed, it appears the primary purpose of the attack was to spread malware.

Safety tips to avoid phishing emails:

- Verify links before you click them
- Avoid sending sensitive information over email or texts
- Apply software updates and patches
- Filter spam emails and Block IP addresses, domain names, and file types you know to be bad

[Learn more about cyber security](#) and tips and actions you can take to keep your information safe.

If you have received a suspicious email from a City of Welland staff account and are unsure if the information you have sent to the City has been compromised, please email cyber@welland.ca for further investigation.

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