

Daixin ransomware team claims responsibility in BWH hack

Heather Wright
The Independent

TransForm Shared Services and Bluewater Health are saying little about the details of the hack which has paralyzed computer systems. The OPP, Interpol and the FBI are working with the southwestern Ontario health care organizations on the data breach and have kept a tight lid on any information about what is going on behind the scenes in the investigation.

But people who follow hacks in the health care community have uncovered who the hackers are and in one case, have seen the pilfered data and talked with the criminal group.

DataBreaches.net outed the hackers as Daixin. The blogger behind the website has not only seen some of the 5.6 million pieces of data Daixin stole from Bluewater Health, they talked with Daixin on the dark web.

In a Nov. 1 post, DataBreaches.net reported the Oct. 23 attack, saying the hackers destroyed any backup records as well.

“They knew from the beginning that we had quite a bit of critical data from their internal resources and we weren’t bluffing,” Daixin told DataBreaches. “After much deliberation, they wrote that they were not going to pay.”

DataBreaches earned the trust of the hackers after investigating a number breaches linked to

Daixin a. This time, Daixin said they gained access to Bluewater Health’s system through TransForm Services - the hospital’s IT provider - a week before they deployed the ransomware, Databreaches.net told *The Independent*.

It took the hacker a few hours to take over the system, the website reports. “The networks were completely transparent - we could go anywhere,” Daixin told DataBreaches, adding it was easier to access the system because passwords had been used over and over again.

“We could have been in their system for a very long time and destroyed almost everything – down to the last device (including medical),” Daixin claimed. “We didn’t do that, we just left.”

Brett Callow a threat analyst is with Emsisoft. His company deals with cyber security threats to patient data. He also found the Bluewater Health data on the dark web however he did not access it.

Callow says Daixin is a relatively new player in ransomware - an illegal activity that takes computer data hostage for cash. Ransomware has been around for a couple of decades but has reached “its current epidemic levels” in 2019 and “has been bad ever since.”

Callow says Daixin “has been operating under that brand name since the middle of last year.

They had attacks on the multiple health care organizations, as well as multiple organizations in other sectors. Their demands range from a million bucks north.”

Most ransomware is created in Russia and Eastern Europe, says Callow, but it’s not easy to pin down where the hackers are using it.

“The people who use it to carry out the attacks can be based absolutely anywhere.” And, Callow says, most are financially motivated.

Ransomware demands can be very steep. “The highest demand known is \$214 million - that one wasn’t paid. The highest was paid is \$40 million,” Callow says noting neither were in the health care field.

Daixin claimed in its interview with DataBreaches the hospital refused to negotiate instead pleading to release the data.

With over 12 hours before Daixin’s deadline expired, according to DataBreaches, negotiators using the name ‘Bluewater Health and others’ wrote;

“We have strongly considered your demands, but we cannot pay. We have to use our money, all of our money, for our patients. We understand that this will upset you. But please know this: cancer treatment is being cancelled. Surgeries are being postponed. Our patients are hurting. We

are doing our best to restore our operations, and we will recover. But this attack has resulted in actual pain and suffering. We cannot pay, and we are asking you to delete the data and leave us alone. Our patients and staff have endured enough.”

When the deadline expired, Daixin started dumping data, telling DataBreaches they probably “would have settled for \$4 million.”

Callow says even if the hospital had paid, there would be no guarantee the hackers would have deleted the data it had. And, he says, the key to open up the network would not have solved all the problems instantly.

There has now been three dumps of Bluewater Health information. DataBreaches has viewed all three, including patient information including information about COVID vaccines and medication.

There is also sensitive internal documents like complaints about patient care which named the hospital employee who is the subject of the complain and information about “Morbidity & Mortality” forums which are normally “secure and confidential so that staff can share information about a case frankly and freely and learn from it.” Daixin has not released all the information yet, however DataBreaches expects it will shortly and may be sold to data brokers.



A Nov. 1 screenshot from the dark web with Daixin claiming responsibility for the hack.

Bluewater Health is not alone in its dilemma. Callow says it is unfortunate but more hospitals are victims of hackers than ever before.

“The government’s response to the ransomware problem as the woefully inadequate both in Canada and in other countries. They now try to do a bit more than they’ve done in the past,” noted Callow saying Nov. 2, a number of nations, including Canada, signed a manifesto saying they would not pay ransom.

“It is really a case of too little, too late. Ransomware gangs now have massive resources, multiple, multiple millions of dollars. This is a huge industry where people stand to make absolutely massive amounts of money and is now a lot more challenging to deal with than it would have been some nipped in the bud in the early days.”



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The Wyoming Cattlebarons swarm Pitcher Craig Steadman after he threw the final out as the team captured the Ontario Baseball Association Senior AA crown at the tournament Wyoming hosted over the weekend. The Dresden Bulls also captured the OBA title in the C division. See all the details in the sport section starting on Page 12

‘We knew’ says CK pol

Heather Wright
The Independent

Chatham-Kent staff and politicians were meeting with representatives from York1 Environmental in 2019, years before the Mississauga company shocked Dresden residents with plans to expand the former Dresden Dump.

And, according to documents obtained by *The Independent* under the Municipal Freedom of Information Act, officials knew in June 2022 the company planned to “expand and

fully develop the full 83 acre site.”

In January, York1 filed an application to the Environmental Registry of Ontario outlining its plans to build a new landfill on the Irish School Road site and create a construction and soil waste recycling centre.

It plans to bring up to 6,000 tonnes of construction waste and soil in up to 700 trucks a day to the site.

The move has faced fierce opposition from Dresden residents.

SEE DOCUMENTS PG 2

Where’s the wheelies?

Heather Wright
The Independent

A new recycling system expected to increase the amount of garbage Petrolia diverts from landfills has hit a bump.

In April 2023, Petrolia council approved WM Canada’s plan to bring wheelie bins to town.

Waste Management won a contract to provide recycling paid by the producers who create packaging instead of the municipalities. Part of that was a plan to bring wheelie bins to Petrolia, replacing a blue box program which has diverted about 26 per cent of garbage to recycling.

SEE WHEELIES PG 2

\$33.87M flows to St. Clair

Heather Wright
The Independent

St. Clair Township Mayor Jeff Agar is ecstatic, while some other municipal leaders are disappointed their communities have been left high and dry.

St Clair Township will be able to expand the Courtright waste water treatment plant after the province kicked in \$33.87 million for a \$45 million expansion.

Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey made the announcement Aug. 23 on behalf of Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma. The funding is part of the provinces Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund which helps municipalities develop, repair, and expand water and waste water infrastructure.

“I don’t ever remember getting this kind of a influx of money from the government,” says Agar.

SEE \$33.87 MILLION PG 2

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Documents show CK talking with York1 since 2019

CON'T FROM PG 1

When the plan came to light, Chatham-Kent’s mayor said they had no idea about what was to come. “There has been zero communication and they’re trying to shove this down our throat,” Mayor Darrin Canniff said during the Feb. 26, 2024 meeting. “They’re not treating us as partners at all in this; zero, zip, zilch,” he said angrily adding the people of Dresden had been treated with “disrespect.” But emails from municipal employees show Mayor Canniff, then CAO Don Shropshire, then Councillor Joe Faas and Councillor Jamie McGrail were among the people invited by a consultant to discuss “the Dresden Landfill Proposal” Oct. 8, 2019. The name of the consultant has been redacted from the original email. There was no record of what was discussed at the time. And it appears from the chains of emails in the over 1,000 pages of documents released to *The Independent* about the York1 proposal at the Dresden dump, the issue fell off the table during the pandemic. The inquiries about moving the project forward begin again as the pandemic eases. In April 2022, Ryan Jaques, Director, Planning Services, had received a letter from Armstrong Planning which outlines York1’s plans for the property and the zoning status as legal non-conforming an indication York1 had plans to use the abandoned landfill portion of the 83-acre site. Jaques suggested that about two acres was actually a landfill and could be considered a legal non-conforming use to the current zoning. The company suggested a third of the property had been used for landfilling.

June 27, 2022, the consultant acting for York1 invites McGrail, Faas and Canniff to meet with George Kirchmair, the vice president spearheading the project at The Chilled Cork for lunch. The consultant says Kirchmair will present “preliminary plans for the redevelopment and the proposed new services at the former Waste Wood Disposal site located north of the community of Dresden.” There would also be “preliminary discussions regarding a host community agreement that will benefit primarily the community of Dresden and north Chatham-Kent,” he wrote. After the meeting at the Chilled Cork, CK’s Economic Development Department is brought into the discussions. Manager Jamie Rainbird writes in an email June 27, 2022 that “Yorks goal is to close the purchase and beginning the long process of seeking MOE and municipal approvals to eventually expand and develop the full 83-acre parcel by conducting EAs public consultation process and having the property rezoned.” But the talks don’t seem to be going well. Michael J Smith of Home Atmosphere (It’s not clear if Smith is related to Mark Smith, the owner of Waste Wood Disposal) writes to McGrail and Faas. “George (Kirchmair) can’t move forward due to lack of communication (with CK officials). York is prepared to make a substantial investment in this project that really benefits the Dresden area. There has been lot of work and extensive expense to get the site cleaned up for York’s takeover. Can you help facilitate this?” He asks McGrail and Faas again for

help in September. “York Environmental is asking for an extension for the closing date of the Dresden Tile Yard. The extension will cost a lot of money so asking both of you if there is a way we can expedite paper work on the CK end.” By Dec. 15, 2022 York1 owned the property. In an interview with *The Independent* Tuesday, Councillor Jamie McGrail insists she did not know the scope of York1’s plans when the talks began in 2019. “I didn’t know what it was and it was very vague, so there was nothing asked, because I didn’t understand the scope. There was no business plan; nothing was given,” she said. Councillor Rhonda Jubenville, who was elected in 2022, said she was ‘thrust’ into the discussion two weeks into the job and “was under the impression it (the dump) was going to continue on in some way of what it was already doing...it was pretty small scaled. I didn’t find out about the gravity of how big it was going to be until much later.” But those comments from the Mayor, that “there has been zero communication,” didn’t sit well with Jubenville. “I was upset because we did know about it. We just didn’t know– Or I should say – I didn’t know how big this was going to be. And I’m going to give the benefit of the doubt to my colleagues and mayor that they didn’t know how big this was going to be. But to say they didn’t know about it is misleading, because yes, we did know about it. We did know about it.” Calls and emails to Canniff for an interview were not returned. The project is now subject to an in depth Environmental Assessment.

Waiting on Wheelie bin recycling rollout in Petrolia

CON'T FROM PG 1

Homes in Petrolia were to receive two 64 gallon carts with recycling to be put in a bin with a yellow lid and household garbage going into the bin with the green lid. The bins were to be dropped off at homes in the late fall of 2023, but that didn’t happen. Mike Thompson, Petrolia’s director of operations, has scheduled a meet-

ing with WM to figure out why the company has yet to provide the new service. “We’re supposed to roll out – no pun intended – early this year, but we’re still waiting for Waste Management to get us details in reference to the bins and some other particulars,” says Thompson. He believes part of the issue may be the purchase and delivery of a new

automated truck designed to lift the bins without the help of an employee. WM officials were not immediately available to comment on the delay. The new bins are expected to boost the town’s recycling rate which is well below the provincial target of 60 per cent. The program will cost \$115,000 saving Petrolia \$34,000 a year in recycling fees.

\$33.87 million funding expands Courtright waste water plant

CON'T FROM PG 1

The township has been exploring expansion of the Courtright plant for some time. It became more urgent when Crown Royal maker, Diageo, announced it would be building a new \$245 million plant in St. Clair. The distiller would need most of the capacity from the Courtright plant. There has also been a surge of home building in St. Clair. Bailey says the new plant will create waste water system capacity for over 600 homes and allow more industrial development in the future. Agar is excited about the prospects of attracting more industry to the community. “We weren’t able to really go after a whole lot, because we didn’t have capacity for this because a lot of times now, when industry will come in, they’ll want to hook right into our wastewater system.” Agar says he’s been talking to Bailey about the need for some time and

is thankful for his help to move the project forward. He’s also hopeful the federal government may yet contribute to the project. The mayor expects construction on the plant could begin in the spring of 2025. “I think the EA (Environmental Assessment) process is all done, and I think pretty much the engineering, so it’ll have to go to tender yet, and probably in, like, a couple years, I would think to be finished.” But at least one local politician is concerned. Plympton-Wyoming Councillor Alex Boughen says his town also applied for the grant but was turned down. “Plympton-Wyoming, by far one of the top municipalities in the county for recent residential development, was rejected,” he wrote in a social media post. “A rural municipality like Plympton-Wyoming can only punch above their weight for residential growth for

so long, without things coming to a screeching halt. With the province continuing to push for housing starts, there’s a limit to how much a town like ours can support - financially and beyond.” Boughen says the province is offering the funding again, and municipal staff will apply for a second time, hoping to secure some cash for infrastructure. “Here’s to being optimistic.” Petrolia also applied for a water line replacement on Petrolia Line which will open up the southeast side of town for development. “The second round or intake is now open, and Petrolia is applying for again,” says Petrolia CAO Rick Charlebois. “It would be very difficult for Petrolia to implement this project without grant support. If Petrolia is successful with this second round of the grant, we would initiate construction in 2025.



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Tasting the good life again

Warwick man learns to eat again after three years of getting nutrition from a tube

Heather Wright
The Independent

Steve Lithgow ate two waffles. For most people, its breakfast. For Steve and his wife, Cathy, it's a miracle.

In December 2011, Lithgow was attacked while he refinished a home in Sarnia. He suffered 27 fractures to his face, a traumatic brain injury and was at the verge of death a number of times.

For 13 years, Cathy has been advocating for his medical care and doing everything she can to keep life and limb together.

A big part of that lately has been doing what some doctors thought was impossible; helping Steve eat again.

The Warwick contractor had gone three years being fed nutritional supplements after a medical setback, he was unable to eat by mouth again. For three years, the only nutri-tion he received was from a bag which sent the beige liquid to his stomach.

Steve, during a visit one March day, said if he can't eat, "I might as well be dead."

One day, while they were at a program in the GTA called Aim to Walk, Cathy saw a young boy learning to eat. She'd been told by some of the top doctors in Ontario it "was a pipe dream to believe Steve will ever have anything in his mouth." Lithgow approached the boy's mother and the woman said "You need to see Mohamed."

The Lithgow's called Mohamed A Mohamed, who uses exercises to help patients improve swallowing. While nutritional supplements keep people alive, he says eating improves everyone's quality of life. "Some-body like Steve, what is left in his life besides food? And then, we take that away from him? Yes, he wants to die – of course."

Over a course of 96 visits, sometimes several times a week, Mohamed worked with Lithgow to improve his swallowing and facial muscles. Today, he's eating by mouth three times a day. The food is mostly pureed, but he's had everything from liver to peaches to a Whopper. And Cathy was excited when he ate two waffles without being smushed up.

Aside from the pleasure of eating, Cathy feels eating real food again is making a dif-ference.

"Brains needs a long time to heal by long time I mean we're talking years. He turned himself in his bed today onto his side..first time in 13 years almost," she says. Lithgow's breathing is better as is his oxygen levels. And she says he's moving his arm better.

"Everything is firing up!" she says adding "Mohamed truly as been sent from God."

Steve Lithgow is obviously enjoying the taste of food again. But if you ask him if he's feeling better, he'll tell you not yet.

"When will you be better, Steve?" says Cathy.

"When I go back to work."



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Mohamed A Mohamed works with Steve Lithgow to eat a cheese sandwich. Lithgow suffered a traumatic brain injury in 2011 and recently learned to eat food, like this pureed liver and veggies, again. The Lithgows also welcomed a new grandson, Rory.



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Town of Plympton - Wyoming
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING
Concerning Proposed
Official Plan Amendment #57, AND
Zoning By-law Amendment 121 of 2023
and consideration of Licensing By-law 116 of 2023

Take Notice that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Plympton-Wyoming will hold a **Public Meeting on Monday, May 27th, 2024, at 6:00p.m. at the Town Council Chambers** to consider a Short-Term Rental Licensing By-law, being By-law 116 of 2023. Subsequently, proposed Official Plan & Zoning By-law Amendments under Sections 22 & 34 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, will also be considered.

Note, Council Chambers has a limited capacity for in-person participation. The meeting will be streamed live and recorded for public viewing on the Town's YouTube page using the following link: www.youtube.com/@townofplymptonwyoming/streams Should you wish to participate virtually, you must register in advance to LSmeekens@plympton-wyoming.ca by 12:00 p.m. Monday, May 27th, 2024 to receive instructions on virtual attendance.

The Proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendments would amend the Town of Plympton-Wyoming Official Plan & Zoning By-law to enable regulation and enforcement of Short-Term Rentals.

No Key Map has been provided as the proposed Official Plan Amendment, and Zoning By-law Amendment apply to all land within the boundaries of the Town of Plympton-Wyoming

The Proposed Amendments and copies of this notice will be available at the public meeting or by visiting or contacting the Municipal Office at the address below during regular office hours after Wednesday, May 22nd, 2024. Note, when considering whether to attend, there is the potential of the amendments not being passed exactly as drafted.

Dated this 2nd day of May, 2024

For more information about this matter, including information about appeal rights, contact:
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