

**Ministry of Government and
Consumer Services**

**Ministère des Services
gouvernementaux et des
Services aux consommateurs**



Office of the Minister

Bureau du ministre

5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto ON M5B 2H7
Tel.: 416 212-2665
TTY: 416 915-0001

5^e étage, 777, rue Bay
Toronto ON M5B 2H7
Tél. : 416 212-2665
ATS : 416 915-0001

996-2021-291

April 14, 2021

Mr. Robert Wong
Chair, Ontario Expert Panel on Cyber Security

Dear Mr. Wong,

I am pleased to receive the Interim Report of Ontario's Cyber Security Expert Panel.

I would like to express my gratitude to you for your leadership of the panel and to all members for their important contributions.

The work of the panel is part of our government's efforts to strengthen cyber security infrastructure as we make public services more digitally accessible. As the trend of maintaining and sharing digital information accelerates, it is crucial that we adopt best practices and encourage cyber security education and awareness across our organizations.

Under your leadership, the panel moved quickly to provide valuable insight into cyber security in the broader public sector. With this letter, I express my support for the findings and recommendations outlined in the Expert Panel's Interim Report.

Your findings highlight a number of valuable insights, including:

- There is a wide range of cyber security capability and maturity within sectors;
- Resources are constrained and there is a shortage of cyber security professionals in the marketplace;
- The difficulties in replacing unsupported legacy software; and
- The importance of addressing cyber security at organizational governance and executive levels.

These findings align with the work my ministry is doing in the Cyber Security Strategy and the advice I have received from officials. I appreciate the validation of this work by the Expert Panel.

As you know, my ministry has been committed to enhancing cyber security in Ontario. We established the [Cyber Security Centre of Excellence](#) and delivered a 2020 conference, [Keeping Pace: Cyber Security in Ontario's Public Sector](#), as part of our efforts to supporting the broader public sector in its cyber security. We also remain committed to our ongoing work for a 2021 conference later this year and the development of additional cyber security learning materials.

I also note the two recommendations made in the report:

1. That the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity framework be endorsed by the Ontario government for the broader public sector; and
2. That all broader public sector entities implement a cyber security education and awareness training program.

The recommendation to support the NIST framework is vital and is being examined by my ministry and partner ministries to understand what this means in practice. I recognize the importance of a consistent approach and language to ensure a single, coherent public sector cyber security ecosystem, and want to ensure that the broader public sector has the necessary support to best utilize the NIST framework. I would also value the panel's input and recommendations on the best means to accomplish this.

I strongly support the recommendation that broader public sector entities establish cyber security education and training programs. I appreciate that this recommendation is addressed to broader public sector entities, and, to assist them in these efforts, our government established a [cyber security learning portal](#) in partnership with Ryerson University's Rogers Cybersecure Catalyst. The first learning modules were developed for IT learners. Future modules will also address non-technical learners and board members.

I fully support the recommendation that the Expert Panel's Interim Report be available on [cybersecurityontario.ca](#). The panel's approach in providing an Interim Report will enable us to take early action to improve cyber security practice.

Safeguarding data privacy and protection are top priorities for our government. I look forward to the Expert Panel's final report that will detail the recommendations of the cyber security strategy and options to improve the cyber security posture of broader public sector organizations. I also look forward to receiving a Project Plan for this important work. I encourage you to establish working groups to assist in making rapid progress on the various aspects of cyber security that will inform a comprehensive set of recommendations.

Through the course of your activity I wish to ensure your insights and analysis are shared with all who have a stake in the success of our collective cyber security efforts. By working together, we will accomplish this goal through a communication strategy for the broader public sector. I seek your early advice on how we can best engage with key partners and continue the engagement with broader public sector stakeholders, and I have asked my officials to work with you on a communications plan.

Once again, please accept my thanks for the dedication and advice you continue to provide. I look forward to our continued collaboration as we work to build a more cyber-secure Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Government and Consumer Services

c: Karen Hughes, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Government and Consumer Services