



## The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Technology & Client Services

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Shaun Fuerth, Director Technology & Client Services

**Date to Council:** September 24, 2024

**Report Number:** TCS-2024-04

**Subject:** Regional IT Mutual Aid Agreement

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### Recommendations

It is recommended:

**That** Report TCS-2024-04 entitled “Regional IT Mutual Aid Agreement” **be received;**

**And that** By-Law 2024-080 **be considered** for the first, second, third and final reading to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the Regional IT Mutual Aid Agreement.

### Background

In 2021, the Town engaged Perry Consulting Group to conduct an Information Technology Service Review (ITSR). Many recommendations were made in the ITSR which included additional staffing resources, development of a Digital Strategy and a Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan (BCDRP).

A BCDRP would be invoked in the event staff would not have access to the Town’s computing systems, network and/or the internet. This event could be due to a natural disaster, fire, damage to the Town’s data center or a Cyber attack. Administration has been developing and updating a BCDRP for all departments while working with neighbouring municipalities to compare plans and possible synergies where commonalities exist.

There are several municipalities in Ontario that have experienced Cyber attacks in recent years, most of which resulted in a disruption to provision of services to businesses and residents. During such an event, the main objective is to restore services and access to technology as soon as possible with all resources available.

An IT Emergency Mutual Aid agreement between municipalities can offer several key benefits, particularly in times of crisis or technical difficulties. These agreements create a formalized structure for collaboration, allowing municipalities to pool resources and expertise when needed. Here are some benefits:

### 1. Rapid Response to Crises

- **Faster Recovery:** During cyber attacks, data breaches, or other IT disasters, the Town can quickly access help from neighbouring municipalities if needed, ensuring rapid response and minimizing downtime.

### 2. Resource Sharing

- **Cost Savings:** Municipalities can share IT tools, personnel, and technologies, potentially reducing the need for every municipality to invest heavily in expensive redundant infrastructure or highly specialized personnel.
- **Better Equipment Access:** Municipality may be able to gain access to the necessary hardware, software, and resources in times of emergency.

### 3. Increased Resilience

- **Business Continuity:** By having backup support from other municipalities, critical systems and services (like emergency response, water management, or public safety systems) may be less likely to fail during IT emergencies.
- **Data Redundancy:** In some cases, sharing data storage and backup systems across municipalities helps safeguard data in cases of localized incidents such as natural disasters, cyberattacks, or infrastructure failures.

### 4. Training and Preparedness

- **Cross-Training Opportunities:** Regular collaboration allows IT staff to learn from each other, share best practices, and better understand each municipality's unique IT environment, improving overall preparedness. The Regional IT Working Group meets several times a year.
- **Coordinated Drills:** Municipalities can work together to simulate cyberattack or disaster recovery scenarios, ensuring better coordination during actual incidents.

## 5. Improved Cybersecurity

- **Collaborative Defense Strategies:** By working together, municipalities can share threat intelligence, jointly identify vulnerabilities, and implement coordinated defenses against cyber threats.
- **Reduced Risk of Isolation:** When a municipality is targeted by a cyber attack, having an alliance in place ensures it is not tackling the threat alone. Neighbouring municipalities can work together with tools, resources, and expertise.

## 6. Scalability and Flexibility

- **Adaptable to Different Crisis Levels:** The agreement can scale according to the severity of the emergency, whether it is a minor IT issue or a large-scale cyber crisis.
- **Shared Personnel Pool:** In emergencies, trained IT staff from one municipality can assist others, helping to ensure continuity of government services and reducing the burden on staff within a single municipality.

## 7. Political and Public Confidence

- **Strengthened Public Trust:** When municipalities demonstrate they have a robust plan in place to handle IT emergencies through mutual cooperation, public confidence in local government increases.
- **Political Collaboration:** It fosters stronger relationships between local governments, enhancing broader regional cooperation beyond IT matters.

Overall, a mutual aid agreement offers enhanced resilience, cost-efficiency, and improved capacity to handle the growing complexity and threat landscape of modern IT environments.

## Comments

In light of the Town's efforts to mitigate any prolonged technology outages, Administration has been working with all municipalities in the region to garner support for an IT Mutual Aid Agreement. This concept was presented to area CAO's earlier this year and in August a final document was agreed to by all parties. This agreement provides the framework where a municipality in need of additional IT support during an event as described above could reach out to other municipalities for assistance in the form of IT personnel and/or IT related equipment. Depending on the circumstances, there is no obligation to provide assistance, but should a municipality wish to do so the request, timing, liability, approval and compensation issues have been defined in the

agreement in advance thus saving time during the emergency. This model is very similar to Mutual Aid agreements between area Fire & Rescue Departments.

This agreement/letter of understanding is between the following 11 municipalities:

- County of Essex
- City of Windsor
- Municipality of Chatham-Kent
- Township of Pelee
- 7 lower tier municipalities within County of Essex

Highlights of this agreement include:

1. Request for assistance is made from a municipality in need by the CAO to the CAO of another municipality (Responding Party). The Responding Party can then decide to provide or not provide assistance.
2. Assistance can be provided in the way of personnel, services, equipment or materials.
3. Costs associated with the provision of Mutual Assistance are borne by the Responding Party except for reasonable daily expenses.
4. During the terms of the agreement, each party shall have in place and maintain general liability insurance.
5. The Responding Party will adhere to a Non-Disclosure Policy Agreement prior to initiating any assistance.

## **Consultations**

County of Essex  
City of Windsor  
Municipality of Chatham-Kent  
Town of Amherstburg  
Town of Essex  
Town of Kingsville  
Town of Lakeshore  
Town of LaSalle  
Municipality of Leamington  
Township of Pelee

## Financial Implications

In the event the Town (responding party) was called upon to assist another Municipality pursuant to the parameters within this agreement, the Town would be financially liable for staffing resources provided. In the event the Town (receiving party) was in need of assistance from another municipality, there would be the potential of daily expenses paid to the responding party during the IT emergency.

## Link to Strategic Priorities

| Applicable                          | <a href="#">2023-2026 Strategic Priorities</a>  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Sustainable Growth: Achieve prosperity and a livable community through sustainable growth.                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Community Health and Inclusion: Integrate community health and inclusion into our places and spaces and everything we do. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Service Experience: Enhance the experience of Team Tecumseh and our citizens through responsive and respectful service.   |

## Communications

Not applicable

Website

Social Media

News Release

Local Newspaper

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Shaun Fuerth, BCS  
Director Technology & Client Services

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Administrative Officer

| <b>Attachment Number</b> | <b>Attachment Name</b>           |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1                        | Regional IT Mutual Aid Agreement |
| 2                        | By-law 2024-080                  |