

EQAO says cyber attack brought down online literacy test

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) says technical problems that led to its online literacy test being cancelled last week were deliberate.

According to a statement from EQAO, the source of the issues behind the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) was an intentional, malicious and sustained Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack.

The statement, released Monday, noted that the EQAO office is still investigating the hack, which prevented thousands of Ontario Grade 10 students from taking the test.

An extremely large volume of traffic from a vast set of IP addresses around the globe was targeted at the network hosting the assessment application, the statement read, adding that they don't know who was behind the cyberattack.

Last Thursday was the first time students were being offered the chance to do the test online.

At the time, EQAO was baffled by what could have caused the system to crash, as

the system went through testing before being rolled out.

Taking the pilot online test was optional, but many Peel high schools were signed up to take it, including upwards of 800 students in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

Students in the Catholic board, as well as the Peel District School Board, didn't face a penalty for missing the test.

EQAO remains confident that they the online test can be used in the future, despite the recent disruption.

There will be discussions over the next few weeks to determine how to strengthen the system and we will continue to work with Ontario's education community to understand how to best use online assessments to benefit our province's students, Richard Jones, EQAO's director of assessment, said in the release.

Students will have the option of doing a written or online version of the literacy test in March.

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