

4

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - ANNUAL REPORT 2008

The Finance and Administration Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated January 7, 2009, from the Commissioner of Finance.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report informs Regional Council about 2008 activities to sustain the Region's computing facilities and the work carried out by Information Technology Services with the Departments to implement information technology systems that assist Departments in delivering Regional services.

3. BACKGROUND

As York Region grows, staff continue to rely on information technology to facilitate delivery of Regional services. Particularly in times of economic downturn, organizations look to information technology as a way to control costs while maintaining service levels. In 2008, as in past years, Information Technology Services has collaborated with the Departments on the best ways to maintain the Region's computing environment, serve departmental needs and advance the corporate information technology strategy for the benefit of the entire Region.

Role of the Information Technology Services Branch: Information Technology Services is responsible for the Region's data centers; the data and voice communication networks including wiring within Regional buildings and the fibre optic links connecting these facilities to the data centre; the data processing and data storage equipment; staff desktop, laptop and hand held computing devices; the Region's Internet sites and the software used on the computing equipment. As well, Information Technology Services staff work with Clerks and Audit Services to implement mechanisms to protect Regional data and secure Regional computing facilities.

Role of the Departments: Departments, working with Information Technology Services, identify opportunities to use information technology to enable faster, better and less expensive delivery of Regional services. Information technology support is provided through a complement of Business Support Analysts assigned to departments to

collaborate with departmental staff and to help implement local information technology projects that enhance departmental operations.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

2008 was a year of significant accomplishments as well as significant challenges for Information Technology Services. The information technology staff worked with Departments to accomplish the following:

Keeping the Computing Facilities Healthy and Responsive

During 2008 Information Technology Services staff were involved in a number of projects designed to keep the computing equipment used by Regional staff reliable, and to maintain the services delivered to citizens. These included:

Desktop PCs	453
Docking Stations	153
Monitors	644
Laptop PCs	224
Printers	34
Scanners	6
Tablets	23
Total Equipment Deployed	1,537

- **Equipping New Staff – Refreshing the Technology Used by Existing Staff**

Information Technology Services deployed over 1,500 PCs, Laptops, Thin Clients, Tablets and other devices to Regional staff in 2008 to refresh end-of-life equipment and to provide equipment for new staff and for new Departmental initiatives.

- **Investing in a New Server for the ICON System in Courts**

In 2008 staff replaced the existing outdated server for the provincially-based ICON system. This change has made this critical application significantly more reliable and robust.

- **Replacing the Backbone Network in the Computer Room**

The core components that connect the network to the applications processors and the data storage equipment were upgraded to keep pace with the growth in the computing needs of the Departments.

- **Replacing Approximately Half of the Network Back Up Power Supplies in Regional Buildings**

Regional computing systems are highly reliable, in part due to battery back up power supplies in all Regional buildings and computing sites consisting of batteries that weigh up to 300 to 400 lbs. Over time these batteries wear out and have to be replaced.

- **Optimizing the Citrix Computing Equipment**

The server-based computing (SBC) applications have been made much more stable allowing them to run more efficiently. We moved the applications that are not suitable for SBC back to the PC environment.

Responding to Departmental Growth

Two sites were added to the Region's computing network during 2008:

- 8050 Woodbine (Computer-Aided Dispatch Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD AVL) solution for Miller Transit)
- 534 Kent Drive (CAD AVL solution for Laidlaw Transit)

Two existing sites were upgraded (22 Prospect and 194 Eagle Street) from 10 Megabyte service circuits to 100 Megabytes service circuits.

Assisting Departments with Day-to-Day Issues

The technology used by Human Resource Services was relocated to the Gates of York. Thirty-five Human Resource Services staff were moved from the 1st floor of the Administrative building to Unit 9 Gates of York.

IT responded to Service Requests from Regional staff. Information Technology Services staff responded to and fulfilled over 3,500 Service Requests to meet staff day to day operational needs.

Enhancing What Departments Are Able To Do With Information Technology

In 2008 these information processing enhancements were implemented for Departments.

- A Customer Relationship Management pilot system for Community and Health Services.
- A PeopleSoft Employee Self-Service pilot system for Human Resources and Payroll.
- A PeopleSoft Asset Management system for Finance to enable the Region to comply with the Public Service Accounting Board (PSAB) 3150 tangible capital asset initiative.
- A Permit Application and Tracking System for Roads occupancy permits.
- A replacement of the Treasury Management System for Finance.
- The continuation of the eDOCS rollouts for Corporate Services and Community and Health Services.
- A Request for Information (RFI) to the marketplace for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) business solutions – issued on behalf of many participating

Municipalities and the Municipal Information Systems Associations (MISA) - Ontario as part of the ERP Roadmap initiative.

- Mr. Compliance - a pilot system for Roads to coordinate and plan routine and preventative road maintenance to provide full compliance with the minimum maintenance standards for Municipal Highways.
- Kardpoll for Roads - a tool for accessing and monitoring fuel dispensing depots operated by the Region for Regional use. The system is jointly used by Roads and York Region Police.
- ScheduleSoft for Transit Mobility Plus – to enable employee scheduling for their call centre operations.
- Digital Audio Recording system (DAR) for Court Services. The DAR system allows Court Services to digitally record and transcribe court proceedings.
- ArchiBUS Phase 1 for Property Services. The Lease & Property and Space Management modules are live as of November 2008. Phase II, Building Operations, will go live March 2009. ArchiBUS will replace a number of small databases and manual tools currently used by Property Services staff and will provide a more efficient tool to manage their buildings portfolio.

Providing a Wireless Communications Solution for Long Term Care While Integrating Their Phone Systems into the Regional Network

The Long Term Care (LTC) facilities in both Newmarket and Maple had aging desktop phones that were not connected to the Regional phone system and not supported by Information Technology Services. Their wireless portable handsets, carried by care givers, were beginning to fail and replacement units were no longer manufactured. Residents were being put at risk.

The Maple LTC site now has 56 new desktop phones and 35 new wireless handsets. The Eagle Street LTC site now has 109 new desktop phones and 33 new wireless handsets. Both these sites are now integrated into the Regional telephone system and supported by Information Technology Services

Continuing to Build Technology Skills and Awareness with Regional Staff

Technology in the Round: In November 2008, Information Technology Services produced Technology-In-The-Round, a showcase featuring

- Speakers from the technology industry talking about technology trends and directions.
- Tips and Techniques Workshops that provided staff with new skills and techniques on how to be more productive when using the Region's technology tools.

- An exposition featuring a dozen Regional departmental business units who demonstrated how they use information technology to delivery better services to Region citizens and businesses.

Technology Courses for Regional Staff: Information Technology Services maintains a class room at the Tannery and offers technology skills courses to Regional staff. The courses are offered through the Region's Corporate Learning Registration System and cover a variety of topics to improve staff productivity and efficiency including: Microsoft Word, Excel, Adobe Acrobat, Citrix, Illustrator, InDesign and eDocs.

In 2008, 608 Regional staff attended technical skills development courses.

“The Portal” – The Beginning of a New Way to Reach Citizens

During 2007 and 2008 the Region collaborated with the Town of Markham and the other Regional municipalities to define the costs and benefits of an internet Portal. RFP's were issued and a supplier was selected. In 2008 Regional Council and the Council of the Town of Markham approved the acquisition of portal technology and the recommended joint project to begin portal implementation.

Creating the e-Service Culture

The 2008 Information Technology Strategy Development Process: The 2008 information technology strategy sets out a Region path for:

- continuous service improvement in the short term and e-Government in the longer term;
- a more effective internal information technology delivery strategy as the basis for improved collaboration among business units and Information Technology Services' staff; and
- a recommendation to implement 4 Key Strategy Initiatives (i.e. Customer Relationship Management; Business Intelligence; Mobile Computing and Asset Management), as corporate imperatives.

The focus of the 2008 strategy is to chart a roadmap to the future for an effective transition to e-Government within the context of e-Service York. It is about making choices. These choices are grounded in existing documents and emerging business drivers. Guiding documents include: Vision 2026; the York Region Customer Service Strategy; previous versions of the York Region Information Technology Strategy (YRITS); and our high level Enterprise Architecture.

The strategy is also based on emerging citizen expectations for anywhere, anytime Regional government service delivery and a desire to maximize corporate value through cross-departmental integration of best practices and processes.

The 2008 strategy was developed with input from members of the Senior Administrative Team, the Corporate Technology Review Committee (CTRC), the Region Leadership Forum, and other Regional staff and management.

Continuing the Implementation of Virtualization – Our Commitment to Green Computing

Information Technology Services maintains three data centres that each contain a large amount of equipment that requires large amounts of electricity. Much of that electricity is wasted as heat. This heat increases the cooling required in the data centres which in turn increases electricity usage for the air conditioning equipment.

Virtualization is a technology that allows technicians to install multiple “virtual servers” on a single physical server. Virtualization allows physical servers to run much closer to peak capacity, reducing the need for new hardware.

Implementing virtualization has reduced the number of physical servers required to support the Region’s services which in effect reduces the requirements for power and air conditioning in our data centers. Reducing power and air conditioning are two of the key concepts in “Greening” a data center.

Since the “Greening” initiative started, Information Technology Services has removed over 60 physical servers from the data centers and replaced them with virtual servers. The growth average for virtual servers is 67% per year and the number of physical servers will continue to decrease as older physical servers are replaced with more virtual servers.

Searching for Computer Room and Technology Staff Space

During 2008, Information Technology Services continued the search, with the Facilities Branch, for an alternative location for the computer room presently located at the Administrative Centre, for a secondary data centre to house the Disaster Recovery equipment as well as for additional office space for Information Technology Services staff. Plans are in place for a majority of the Information Technology Services staff to be re-located from the Administrative Centre during Spring 2009 on an interim basis to the Town Hall of the Town of Newmarket.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications from this report. Operations and project activity impacts are reflected in the Information Technology Services operating and capital budgets, and in departmental budgets.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

In 2008, Information Technology Services staff met on a regular basis with staff of the local municipalities to share information and ideas as well as to collaborate on projects through the York Municipal IT Directors Forum.

7. CONCLUSION

There are numerous opportunities to invest in information technology. The Information Technology Services branch plays a key role in evaluating technology opportunities, implementing technologies needed by departments and approved by Council and in operating and maintaining the Region's information technology infrastructure for use by Regional staff and, in turn, to serve the residents of York Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Bruce Dotzenroth, Manager Corporate Programs in the Information Technology Services Branch at Ext.1773

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.