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## Directions Newsletter Regular Meeting of the Board – January 2017

### Technology Status Report

*Presented by Rob Geiger, Manager of Information Systems*

**Vision:** *We create secure, safe, reliable, and easy-to-use Technology Information Systems that support the learning needs of students and staff.*

**Mission:** *We plan and deploy technology services and maintain Technology Information Systems by providing friendly support in a timely manner.*

### Hardware and Chromebook Pilots

Our current fleet of desktop computers are over 9 years old (they will turn 10 in October 2017). The industry standard is to replace hardware on a 4-6 year cycle because total cost of ownership increases significantly after 5 years and newer software tends to require more powerful computers.

Our new Windows 7 image has taxed our older hardware causing unsatisfactory performance. We have improved many aspects of our image, servers, and networking over the last two years and while this has created a better experience for users, many still experience long login times, occasional lock-ups and general slowness. Additionally, our older desktops are unable to run many modern websites. Our desktop machines have provided incredible service over their long life - far better than anyone would have predicted - but they have reached their end of life.

Knowing that we had to replace hardware in the very near future, we treated the need as an opportunity to reinvent our computing environments and determine the best option for students and staff. Over the last 12 months this exploration process led to Chromebook pilots which were successfully implemented in 4 phases, with positive feedback from both staff and students at the pilot schools.

The Chinook School Board has approved a plan to purchase Chromebooks over a two-year budget period. The price difference between Chromebooks and traditional Windows desktops is approximately \$350 per unit. This will result in over \$650,000 savings over the two years of the project. Windows-based hardware renewal has been budgeted for 2016-17 and 2017-18 as well.

## **Cisco Phone System**

The phone hardware used in almost all Chinook buildings is an older Nortel system, and it will become more difficult to find technicians who have the skills to maintain this system. When École Centennial was built, a modern Cisco VOIP phone system was installed. In June 2016, the Cisco system was expanded and installed in CEC. In the future, we will likely install this new VOIP system in schools when we need to replace the aging Nortel equipment.

## **Disaster Recovery**

We have started a disaster recovery project that will be completed in February 2017. In a disaster situation, if our entire data centre was destroyed, we would be able to recover and start our servers through Azure Disaster Recovery in 12-48 hours. There is an annual cost to this service, but it provides excellent insurance for the cost. Once this project is completed, IBM will conduct a test of its functionality and produce a report on the results which we will submit to our auditors.

## **Wireless Networking**

Over the last 6 months, we have been replacing our HP wireless networking hardware (access points and controllers) with Aruba hardware. This first step of this project included a complete wireless assessment and planning phase for every school where wireless planning software has been used to maximize access point placement for the best coverage. This has allowed us to create wireless environments that provide excellent access for students and staff while using approximately 30% less access points. At this time, 24 of 31 buildings have been upgraded to new Aruba wireless hardware. The feedback on this new wireless network has been very positive.

## **Financial Report to November 30, 2016**

*Presented by Sharie Sloman, Controller and Rod Quintin, CFO*

**Revenues:** The cycle for property tax collections is unbalanced with a larger proportion of collections during the first quarter. Operating grant receipts of 25% are tracking to budget and align with the portion of the year expired. Capital grant receipts are difficult to accurately budget within a given period as they are dependent on the timing of capital work completions.

Overall year to date revenue of \$29.2M is 33% of budget.

**Expenditures:** Years to date expenditures for most areas including Governance, Administration and Transportation are closely aligned with budget planning. Plant Operation and Maintenance costs are cyclical in nature dependent on weather and maintenance activity. There are some variances in Instruction due to benefits, sick leave, sub salaries and sub plans.

Overall, the year-to-date expenditures of \$23.7M are at 26% of budget.

## **Introduction to Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)**

*Presented by Sharon Mayall, Curriculum Coordinator and Liam Choo-Foo, Director of Education*

In the Board's leadership role for the Division, they have committed to an annual strategic planning process. As a result, they have created a school division strategic plan for 2017-19, giving direction to our schools as they do their planning for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 years. These plans are also aligned with the provincial education sector plan. The Division level plan will be finalized and will be presented to the Board for approval at their meeting in February.

The provincial education sector plan was developed collaboratively with public school divisions, Catholic school divisions, Conseil des écoles francsaskoises, First Nations, Métis, Ministry of Education, school boards and students. The goal of the strategic plan is to enhance the experience and achievement of all Saskatchewan students using a Student First approach to focus our work on what matters most...the student. The provincial education sector plan will be finalized and approved by February.

### **By-election for Subdivision 4**

Due to the unfortunate passing of Chinook Board member Bernie Ford, the position of trustee for Subdivision 4 is now vacant. Following legislation, the Board has appointed Rod Quintin as Returning Officer and the by-election date is set for April 12, 2017. Advertising, as necessary, will follow according to legislative requirements.