



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2023-11

MEETING DATE: MARCH 16, 2023

SUBJECT: 2022 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES – UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

For Information Only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide information on initiatives undertaken in 2022 to enhance environmental stewardship across the organization, in keeping with the objective of being an environmentally friendly organization.

BACKGROUND

At the January 23, 2014, meeting, the Board requested that a report outlining the green energy initiatives and potential energy savings be presented annually, which has been provided since that date.

Since that time, and with a view to expanding the scope of environmental stewardship to all areas of the organization, TBDSSAB has continued to view various operational items through that environmental stewardship lens.

COMMENTS

Current and On-going Initiatives

Housing Portfolio Energy Management

Significant energy-related projects have been implemented through the annual TBDSSAB approved Capital Budgets, as well as through provincially 100% funded initiatives over the years.

In addition, energy-efficient products replaced high-energy-usage products to reduce consumption. Several of these projects were supported through energy savings incentive programs provided by Synergy North, Hydro One, Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and Enbridge.

Through the Board-approved Year 2022 Capital Budget, twenty-one projects were identified with an environmental stewardship lens. Attachment #1 outlines the list of projects completed in 2022.

The most significant projects in 2022 included:

1. The installation of domestic hot water infrastructure at Assef Court to provide more efficient and effective domestic hot water production, while reducing energy costs and lowering the carbon dioxide emissions;
2. The replacement of fifteen exterior windows at Wadsworth Crescent (Nipigon) to increase the energy efficiency and decrease the heat loss of older windows;
3. The upgrade to LED light fixtures throughout all units at McIvor Court to achieve improved energy efficiency, visibility and aesthetics.

From the installation of more energy-efficient products through these initiatives, additional operational savings are expected over the useful life span due to lower consumption, maintenance, and repair costs.

Paper Reduction Initiative

Significant efforts were undertaken over the past four years across the organization to reduce the amount of paper produced, printed, and distributed. In addition to previous advancements made to reduce paper, the following processes were finalized in 2022 which further aided in the achievement of the paper reduction goal:

- Continued digitizing applications for Housing Security Funds, Social Services Relief Fund Housing Arrears program, and Reaching Home applications;
- Continued marketing of the Ontario Works (OW) My Benefit application for two-way communication between the client and the caseworker by establishing plans to reduce the required paper intake for these programs;
- Enhanced paperless processes for those OW clients who are active in My Benefits, as they have stopped receiving the following paper documents by mail if their preference is to go paperless:
 - statement of assistance
 - reporting forms
 - cheque inserts.
- Eliminated the Social Assistance printed dental cards, in favour of online approvals;
- Implemented electronic formats for human resources recruitment files;
- Moved to web based and e-recruiting formats, and no longer using local paper media formats for recruitment processes;
- Continued paperless processes for child care files; and
- Digitizing the Community Housing application form, to be pilot tested in 2023.

TBDSSAB paper purchases have been steadily declining since the start of these initiatives approximately four years ago. In 2019, TBDSSAB purchased 1,155,000 pieces of paper; in 2022, actual paper purchases totaled 737,500, with savings of \$3,911.

Community Gardens

Tenant inclusion efforts continue to be supported by TBDSSAB Tenant Support Workers, through the organic community gardens. These projects continue to help deliver the TBDSSAB goal of being an environmentally friendly organization. Involving tenants in community gardens, and producing some of their own food, instills the value of working with the earth and protecting the environment while support food security efforts.

Throughout the housing portfolio, eight large community gardens and many flower gardens have continued to be maintained with the support of tenants and the Housing Programs team. The larger garden sites were equipped with compost bins and rain barrels to support sustainability efforts.

Neighbourhood Cleaning and Recycling

Annual tenant community cleaning efforts have continued to take place in many TBDSSAB neighbourhoods involving tenants to help beautify and clean their homes and outdoor areas. Families and individuals are engaged in this process, encouraging the involvement of the children to have them understand the importance of 'pitching in' to keep their community green.

Additionally, recycling programs were previously established and continue to be maintained at 100% of TBDSSAB's apartment-style buildings accounting for 70% of the housing portfolio's units, with education and supports provided to encourage involvement.

Information Services Equipment Consolidation

In June of 2019, Information Services began an initiative to consolidate network and server equipment. This involved using hybrid server and storage systems vs. separate devices for each function, improving server processing capacity allowing TBDSSAB to reduce the number of physical servers by two, while maintaining the same functionality and processing power.

Another initiative was the move from Microsoft Exchange on Premise to Microsoft Exchange Online. Prior to this, TBDSSAB email was hosted onsite, using six virtual servers. Although virtual servers do not use as much power as physical servers, each virtual server takes processing power to run, thus using electricity. By moving TBDSSAB email to Microsoft Online, the number of virtual servers was reduced by five, from seven to two.

The benefit of these projects continues, as energy consumption continues at reduced level (approximately 50% from the usage levels prior to the implementation of these initiatives). Cost avoidance is anticipated to continue. TBDSSAB's current infrastructure is scheduled to be replaced in Q2 of 2023, with equipment that further reduces energy consumption and cooling requirements.

Accounts Payable Process Modernization

In 2022, Administration developed and implemented processes to make the accounts payable function virtually paperless. This enhancement will save approximately 15,000-20,000 sheets of paper from being printed, and ten archive boxes from being stored off-site, as well as the time required to maintain the paper-based process.

Purchasing Policy

Since 2014, the Purchasing Policy CS-03:1 has included Environmental Stewardship to allow for the expanded use of durable products, reusable products, and products (including those used in services) that contain the maximum level of post-consumer waste and/or recyclable content.

Specifications provided for various capital projects, include language to ensure proper disposal of all removed equipment as per environmental guidelines.

Personal Protective Equipment Waste

During the pandemic, and in accordance with public health directives, TBDSSAB supplied masks for staff and clients attending to the Headquarters Office Building. With the move to using only surgical masks in 2021, TBDSSAB joined a waste diversion program to ensure appropriate disposal of used masks. In 2021, TBDSSAB had collected 10 lbs of single use surgical masks that was appropriately disposed of and diverted from the landfill sites; that amount increased to 33 lbs for 2022.

Single Use Plastics

The Federal government has announced its plan to reduce single-use plastics and related plastic waste target to zero by 2030 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In that regard, and in accordance with the Regulations, since December 20, 2022, the manufacture and import for sale in Canada of checkout bags, cutlery, foodservice ware, stir sticks and straws (i.e., straight straws), as defined in the Regulations, are prohibited.

Administration had previously established internal practices to reduce the use of single use plastics including eliminating the purchase of bottled water and plastic dishes and cutlery. In addition, Human Resources has moved towards biodegradable items for all staff events where possible.

Environmental Stewardship Plan

The Province of Ontario's *Preserving and Protecting our Environment for Future Generations – A Made in Ontario Environment Plan*, includes various strategies related to reducing waste that goes to landfills, protecting the air, natural spaces and species, addressing climate change, holding polluters accountable, and supporting infrastructure development while ensuring environmental protection.

In 2021, Administration developed a Cascaded Environmental Plan for TBDSSAB, using the Provincial plan as a framework, and incorporating the concepts as they apply to TBDSSAB. Similar to the Provincial plan, this is a developing project to further align TBDSSAB activities to enhance its environmental stewardship.

TBDSSAB Staff Newsletter

In 2021, the monthly staff newsletter included an environmental stewardship section to enhance information sharing and awareness relative to the environmental stewardship initiatives across the organization. This continued in 2022.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

The Practical Vision of the 2013-2016 Strategic Plan included Green, Environmentally Friendly Housing within the Optimized Housing strategy, which has been further expanded to focus on environmental stewardship across the organization.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Capital Costs – Housing Portfolio

The capital projects included within the Housing Portfolio were included in the Board approved Capital Budget which is financed from the Housing Portfolio Capital Reserve Fund.

Operating Costs

The priority for green, environmentally sustainable practices is to reduce TBDSSAB's environmental footprint, with a secondary impact of cost avoidance on various operating expenses. For example:

- Capital projects' priority is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of utility usage across the housing portfolio by reducing energy waste and thereby positively impacting utility costs. Utility costs remain one of the largest operating expenses TBDSSAB incurs within its housing portfolio. Natural gas and electricity amounted to \$2,473,834 in 2022 (2021: \$2,105,079), which accounts for approximately 14% of the operating costs of the housing portfolio. Although utility costs are not totally controllable, it is anticipated that the green, environmentally friendly initiatives will support cost avoidance by controlling the rise of utility consumption (by reducing energy waste) as unit costs for utilities continue to rise.
- The decrease in paper purchased has resulted in savings of approximately \$3,911.
- Using the energy monitor installed in TBDSSAB's server room to measure energy usage, the reduction and consolidation of Information Services networking and computer equipment resulted in an estimated reduction in electricity costs from \$985 to \$505 per month, a savings of approximately \$5,500 annually.

Operating cost impacts are and will be factored into and included in annual operating budgets.



CONCLUSION

It is concluded that TBDSSAB continues to meet the strategic direction of providing green, environmentally friendly housing.

It is also concluded that other opportunities to engage in initiatives have been taken and will continue to be investigated and further developed relative to environmental stewardship across the organization.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Attachment #1 [2022 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives Listing](#)

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The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
2022 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives - List of Completed Capital Projects

	Project Name	Description	Actual Project Cost (\$)
1	Assef Court, Thunder Bay	Domestic Hot Water: Replacement of two gas-fired water heaters and two (2) domestic water storage tanks. New domestic water heating system will achieve improved energy efficiency and reliability.	71,191
2	Mclvor Court, Thunder Bay	LED lighting: Replacement of interior lighting throughout the units, transitioning from incandescent light fixtures to LED lighting.	27,358
3	Jasper Place, Thunder Bay	Make Up Air: Replacement of the existing make-up air system, which was original to the building construction. The new make up air system will achieve improved indoor air quality and energy efficiency.	129,026
4	Wadsworth, Nipigon	Windows: Replacement of fifteen (15) exterior windows. Existing windows were original to the building construction. The new windows will achieve greater energy efficiency and building comfort.	18,745
5	Limbrick, Thunder Bay	Sump Pump Replacement: Replacement of twenty two (22) sump pumps. Replacement will achieve improved stormwater drainage and mitigate potential flooding issues.	4,997
			\$ 251,317