



BOARD REPORT

REPORT No.: 2024-12

MEETING DATE: MARCH 21, 2024

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide information on initiatives undertaken in 2023 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 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 Capital Budgets, six projects were identified with an environmental stewardship lens. Attachment #1 outlines the list of projects completed in 2023.

The most significant projects in 2023 included:

1. The installation of new energy efficient windows at Glenwood Court to improve efficiency and reduce heat loss;
2. The installation of a new Ethylene Propylene Diene Terpolymer (EPDM) roof system complete with new insulation at Elizabeth Court. This will increase the air tightness of the building envelope and reduce heat loss; and
3. The installation of a new Make Up Air unit at Elizabeth Court. This will reduce the energy used by the previous unit and reduce the carbon emissions.

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 continued in 2023 which continues to support this initiative:

- Continued digitizing applications for Housing Security Funds;
- 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;
- Continued focus on 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;
- Continued electronic formats for human resources recruitment files;
- Continued web based and e-recruiting formats;
- Continued paperless processes for childcare files;
- All childcare fee subsidy documentation continues to be electronically uploaded in OCCMS; and
- Digitizing the Community Housing application form was pilot tested starting in February 2023. Based on the success of the pilot project, the application process was moved to an electronic / on-line format; the majority of the applications are received by online applicants.

TBDSSAB paper purchases have been steadily declining since the start of these initiatives approximately four years ago. In 2022, TBDSSAB purchased 737,500 pieces of paper; in 2023, actual paper purchased was reduced by 43,500 pieces to 694,000.

The cost of paper increased in 2023 by \$544, from \$6,769 in 2022 to \$7,313 in 2023. This was due to an increase in the commodity cost of paper.

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 supporting food security efforts.

Throughout the housing portfolio, seven large community gardens and many flower gardens have continued to be maintained with the support of tenants and the Housing Operations team. The larger garden sites were equipped with compost bins and rain barrels to support sustainability efforts. Raised garden boxes were added at Manion Court (130 W. Donald Street) in 2023.

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 (IS) 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. This is the minimum number of virtual servers that must be maintained to support TBDSSAB systems.

The benefit of these projects continues, as energy consumption continues at reduced level. Cost avoidance is anticipated to continue based on the reduced number of

servers. In Q3 2023, IS upgraded the core networking infrastructure from chassis style network switches to smaller form factor, more robust switches, reducing the power and energy consumption. In addition, the user access network switches were upgraded to more efficient ones.

This consolidation of equipment has shown a reduction of 508 Kw/h in server room energy usage from 5,717 Kw/h in 2022 to 5,209 Kw/h in 2023.

Accounts Payable Process Modernization

In 2022, Administration developed and implemented processes to make the accounts payable function virtually paperless. This enhancement saves approximately 15,000-20,000 sheets of paper (part of the Paper Reduction Initiative noted above) from being printed each year, 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.

Single Use Plastics

The Federal government 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. Human Resources had moved towards biodegradable items for all staff events where possible. All these practices continued in 2023.

Coffee Pod and Pen Recycling

In 2023, TBDSSAB implemented an in-office recycling program for coffee pods, pens, pencils and markers. Recycling boxes were placed throughout the Headquarters Office Building. Once boxes are filled, they are shipped to a recycling facility and a certificate is issued to confirm proper disposal and record the weight. In 2023, 10.58 lbs of coffee pods were diverted from the landfill.

E-Waste Recycling

In 2022, TBDSSAB implemented an electronic waste collection at its Headquarters Office Building. This waste is collected in bins throughout the office and sent for

recycling under the Electronic Products Recycling Association (EPRA) program and in compliance with all laws and regulations and with Responsible Recycling (R2) standards. Reports are provided for each pickup and a certificate of the amount diverted from the landfill is provided and tracked. In 2023, TBDSSAB recycled 556 lbs. of E-Waste.

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 2023.

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 are included in the Board approved Capital Budget which is financed from the Housing Portfolio Capital Reserve Fund, as well as opportunities through 100% funded capital programs. In 2023, the cost of the completed projects totaled \$1,468,519, of which \$1,170,246 was funded through 100% funded capital programs, and \$317,265 funded through the 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 \$2,397,200 in 2023 (2022: \$2,472,834), which accounts for approximately 13% 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 commodity costs for utilities continue to rise. 2023 shows a reduction in utility costs of \$75,634.

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



CONCLUSION

It is concluded that TBDSSAB continue to focus on 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 [2023 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives – List of Completed Capital Projects](#)

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**The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
2023 Environmental Stewardship Initiatives - List of Completed Capital Projects**

#	Project Name	Description	Actual Project Cost (\$)
1	Appliance Upgrades - various properties	Energy Efficient Appliances: Replacement of older appliances to energy efficient fridges and stoves at various locations.	\$65,608
2	230 Amelia St. W. (Spence Court)	Energy Efficient Appliances: Replacement of older appliances to energy efficient fridges and stoves at Spence Court.	\$17,647
3	275 Madeline St. (Elizabeth Court)	EPDM Roof Replacement: Remove end of life roofing materials and install new insulation and Ethylene Propylene Diene Terpolymer (EPDM) roof membrane to reduce heat loss and create a water tight building envelope.	\$906,614
4	275 Madeline St. (Elizabeth Court)	Make Up Air Replacement: Replace the existing end of life make up air unit to a new more energy efficient unit.	\$220,745
5	170 Donald St. W. (Glenwood Court)	Windows: Existing windows were original to the building construction. The new windows will achieve greater energy efficiency and building comfort.	\$226,934
6	76 Cumberland St.	Roof replacement: Ice shield and shingles were replaced to seal the building envelope and assist in preventing heat loss.	\$48,971
	Total		\$1,486,519