**REPORT TO**

# CORPORATE SERVICES, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

# REFRESH OF PUBLIC AND SCHOOL WEBSITES

"and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." - John 8:32

| Created, Draft | First Tabling | Review |
|---|---|---|
| November 11, 2019 | December 11, 2019 | Click here to enter a date. |

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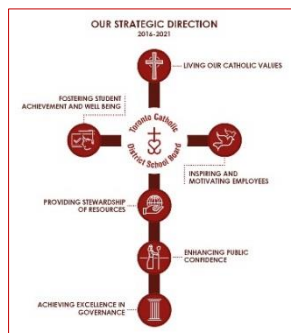
## RECOMMENDATION REPORT

**Vision:**
*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

**Mission:**
*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.*
*We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*

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## A.    EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) public facing website is a critical resource for parents, students, staff, community stakeholders (SEAC), and the general public.  The web is used to provide an abundance of information on TCDSB programs, policies, schools, daily operations, and events.  It is also used as conduit for admissions and other functional elements. However, the website has received many complaints over the last few years about its overall function, authorizations content and user design/experience. The website has not been refreshed since 2010.

Staff are recommending a complete overhaul of the TCDSB public website by going to market with a request for proposal (RFP) to select and hire a web development/design firm that will assist TCDSB staff in completing robust stakeholder consultations about how to improve the website, develop the new public website and school sites, and maintain the website going forward. Along with the updated website, staff will develop updated protocols and procedures to ensure the content on the website is as accurate as possible.

Based on initial market analysis and review of similar projects with several local design firms, staff believe this project will take between 12 to 18 months to complete with an approximate cost of up to $500,000. Staff are recommending that the Board of Trustees approve the allocation of this amount be taken from the IT Strategic System reserve.

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 10 hours.*

## B.    PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Board of Trustees about the current state of the TCDSB public website and to propose a high-level plan to refresh the TCDSB public website and school sites.

This report also responds to a request of staff at the January 24th, 2019 Board meeting to provide information about the current protocols for updating the programming information on the public website.

## C.   BACKGROUND

1. The TCDSB public facing website is a critical resource for the parents, students, staff, community stakeholders, and the general public.  The website provides a plethora of information on TCDSB programs, policies, daily operations, and events.  It is also used as a conduit for student admissions.

2. The TCDSB public website also has several other important functional elements including:
      a. Staff Directory
      b. School Finder
      c. Board Meeting Calendar and Agendas
      d. E-news
      e. Policy Directory
      f. Forms Directory

3. The TCDSB public website also contains individual school website with its structure.  These school "micro sites" are used by individual schools to provide local updates and other pertinent information to their school communities. Currently, school administrators are responsible for updating and maintaining their school sites with technical assistance provided by IT and Communications Department.

4. Individual departments such as Special Education, Continuing Education, Student Success, and others also use the TCDSB public website to display information about centrally delivered or managed programming.

5. The TCDSB public website was last refreshed in 2010.

## D.   EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

6. Over the last few years, staff have received several complaints about the website.  Common complaints include, but are not limited to:
      a. School websites are too difficult to update by school staff
      b. The look and feel of the website is dated
      c. The content on the website is dated or inaccurate
      d. The website does not function properly on mobile devices

      e.  Content is difficult to navigate and search

      f.  TCDSB schools are difficult to find on Google search

7.    ICT Service staff have determined that underlying software and infrastructure that runs the website is in state of disrepair.  The hardware running the website is 3 years past its useful life.  The software used to manage the website content is no longer supported by the software vendor and is not receiving critical security updates.  This significantly increases the risk of failure and/or security issues facing the public website.

8.    TCDSB has done its best to maintain the current website with in-house staff who have expertise in software development and IT infrastructure.  However, to develop a modern website, many additional skills are needed such as user experience (UX), graphics design, information architecture, and search engine optimization.

9.    Due to the large scale nature of the website and lack of staff resources required to maintain the site, TCDSB has used a decentralized approach to maintain the website content, with no single department responsible for the overall site. This practice has led to unclear or conflicting information on the website.

10.   At the January 24th, 2019 Board meeting, Trustees received a delegation concerning overcrowding at an elementary school and how staff responded to overcrowding issue.  While the delegation was primarily concerned with the changes to programming at the overcrowded school, the delegate also raised questions about the TCDSB protocols for updating the website as changes to the website had been made regarding the programming information.

11.   Both ICT and Communications reviewed the website protocols and agreed that improvements could be made to the public website including content authorization processes.  The current website update protocol is a mostly decentralized process where authors within a specific department are allowed to make change to area related to their area, department, or school with any additional approvals.

12.   The current website content management system, does not allow for easy workflow and approvals between content authors and content approvers.  As a result, content may be posted online without appropriate review/approval.

## E. ACTION PLAN

1. Given the challenges described above, Staff are recommending a complete overhaul of the TCDSB public website. The overhaul will include:
   a. a new modern look and feel with focus on user experiences and design
   b. the establishment of content controls and site/page authorizations
   c. search engine optimization
   d. a user-friendly interface for school administrators and office staff
   e. improved functionality for school finder, board meetings, policies, staff directory, alerts and e-news.
   f. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliant site
   g. move the website to a hyper-scale cloud provider with capacity to handle peak traffic volumes during major events such as snow storms
   h. de-commissioning of old hardware and software

2. Prior to developing a new website, the successful web design firm and TCDSB staff will conduct robust stakeholder feedback sessions to determine the most important design elements of the new TCDSB website. Feedback will be gathered from internal staff, student leaders, trustees, parents including CPIC and OAPCE, and other community stakeholders. During the web design consultation, the overall look and feel will be discussed; to hear about user frustrations with the current design, any ideas they have, and offer up design concepts that will better represent the TCDSB brand, improve user engagement, and establish metrics into conversion rates.

3. To ensure TCDSB has access to all the necessary technical skills needed to develop a modern website, the TCDSB will go to market with a request for proposal (RFP) to select and hire a web development/design firm that will create and maintain the new public website going forward.

4. A Supervisor of Website/Digital Management will be responsible for overseeing the public website, working with the external web development/design firm, and maintaining website content management practices. This role will report directly to the Chief of Communications. This new role was created from a vacancy within ICT Services and is cost neutral.

5. To ensure the new public website is responsive under heavy traffic and available when with the TCDSB data centre is offline, the new TCDSB website will be hosted with a major cloud infrastructure provider. The exact provider and architecture will be selected and developed in collaboration with the external web development/design firm.

6. Based on an initial market analysis and review of similar projects with several local design firms, the TCDSB anticipates that this project will take 12 to 18 months to complete and cost up to $500,000.

7. Once the RFP is complete, staff will return to the board with a final budget, procurement award, and project plan for the development of the new website.

## F.  STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Trustees approve a budget of $500,000 for the development of a new public website from the IT Strategic System reserve.