



REPORT

CORPORATE AFFAIRS, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

UPDATE REGARDING DIGITAL SIGNAGE

*"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:13 (NRSVCE)*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
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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

In November 2014, the Board deferred the Digital School Signage program pending resolution of the Board's deficit, with the exception of construction of new secondary schools, where digital signage is included in the Capital budget.

The Ministry of Education has confirmed that Digital Signage can be funded through the School Renewal Program. The estimated cost for a digital signage is \$50,000.00, including the sign permit fee required by the City of Toronto. Underground electrical and data connection costs however, are in addition to the estimated supply and installation cost noted above – and are site specific, based on distance within the building to power and data connection, as well as the distance to the sign from the building.

As first detailed in the 2014 report, this report recommends that secondary schools with low enrolment be prioritized for the first phase of digital signage installation. Currently, nine (9) secondary schools have digital signage. An additional three (3) secondary schools that are approved for replacement schools will receive digital signage as part of the new construction.

This report recommends carrying an allowance of \$250,000.00/year in the next School Renewal Program, starting in the 2018-2020 School Renewal Program. Estimated timeline for project completion for all secondary schools is five years, for a total estimated budget of \$1.25M. This would fund an average of four secondary school signs per year including connection costs. In addition, this report recommends that the Board permit secondary schools to proceed if they choose to fund-raise for digital signage. The power and data connection costs would still be covered by the School Renewal Program.

Ninety-two (92) elementary schools currently have some form of ground-mount signage. Of these, forty-five (45) elementary schools have signage with interchangeable letters as detailed in **Appendix A**. This report further recommends a Board-standard design for elementary school signage as detailed in Appendix A. The estimated costs for this sign type is \$5,500.00, (non-illuminated version) including net HST and the City of Toronto signage permit costs. Currently, there is no funding source identified for elementary school signage. In the past, schools have raised funds for signage. Funding for elementary school signage could be considered under the next School Renewal Program for 2018 to 2020.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 45 hours.

B. BACKGROUND

1. Policy S.20, *Program Advertising for Secondary Schools and Continuing Education* from January 25, 1990 recognizes the importance of permanent display signage for secondary schools and continuing education locations, as a means to “to enhance communication, promote community awareness and encourage neighbourhood participation”. However, since this policy was developed, the internet has provided another way for organizations to communicate to stakeholders and for the public to research about schools and programs.
2. The Ministry of Education 2010 Capital Standards for new secondary schools includes “rough-ins” or conduit for connection of an exterior signage, such as digital sign. The standards do not include the cost of the digital sign itself.
3. Currently, there are digital signs located at nine (9) secondary schools – Father Henry Carr, Father John Redmond, James Cardinal McGuigan, St. Mother Teresa, Msgr Percy Johnson, Neil McNeil, St. Joseph College and Michael Power/St. Joseph Secondary Schools and St. Basil-The-Great College, currently in the process of installing a new digital sign funded by the school community. Dante Alighieri, St. Joseph Morrow Park and Blessed Cardinal Newman Secondary Schools will receive digital signage as part of the Capital program to replace these schools.
4. A City of Toronto sign permit is required for installation of permanent display signage. Local conditions, especially if a school is situated on a residential street or if the school is in a historically designated building, may restrict the use of prominent digital or illuminated signage. In 2014, staff requested an exemption from the City to waive the permit fee for school signage, but this request was not approved.
5. There are a variety of signage designs and types across the system for both elementary schools and secondary schools. The majority of schools have the name of the school in letters affixed to the exterior of the building. Ninety-two (92) elementary schools currently have some form of ground-mount signage and of those, forty-five (45) elementary schools have signage with interchangeable letters as detailed in **Appendix A**. The estimated cost for a ground-mount, non-illuminated sign with interchangeable letters as featured in Appendix A is \$5,500.00 (incl. net HST) including the cost of the signage permit.
6. An illuminated sign is more expensive – and is subject to City of Toronto approval with regards to meeting exterior lighting requirements. In addition,

electrical connection from the building to the sign would increase the costs by another \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00, depending on the locations of the sign to the building or the nearest power connection source.

C. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. Digital signage systems can be easily updated by school staff to provide a variety of information regarding programs and special events pertaining to the school as well as the Board. The messaging on digital signage provides information to parents, students and the broader community. **Appendix B** provides a sample of a stand-alone, “podium-style” digital sign.
2. Currently, there is no process in place to determine the impact that a digital sign may have with regards to attracting new students to a school.
3. Several GTA school boards including Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB, as well as the Upper Canada DSB and Simcoe County DSB are working on establishing permanent sign standards whereas some boards such as Peel DSB and TDSB have established a design standard for their school signs, similar to what is recommended in this report.

D. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The cost of digital signage for new secondary schools is included in the Capital budget, and reported through the Ministry of Education’s financial reporting system.
2. Digital signage funded through School Renewal would be reported through the Ministry of Education’s Facility Assessment database, VFA and through the Renewal Program financial reporting system.
3. Issuing a standard design package and combining several installations together under one multi-year contract could result in cost savings to the Board, and possibly allow for additional installation under a shorter timeframe – four years instead of five years.
4. As per the 2014 report “System-wide Approach to Digital Signage”, the following criteria matrix is recommended for the implementation of the phased digital signage program, listed in order by the highest score:
 - a. Secondary schools to receive digital signs with messaging capability on a priority basis over elementary schools;

- b. In order to help boost enrolment, under-subscribed secondary schools should receive signs before other secondary schools. Following this, school with the highest enrolment;
 - c. Secondary Schools that are approved for a major site improvement project (as identified in the current 2016 – 2018 School Renewal Program), should include the work associated with supply/installation of a digital sign as there will be potential cost-savings to include the signage as part of the site work;
 - d. Secondary Schools that are currently listed in the top ten of the Capital Priorities matrix for a replacement school or major addition should be placed in the last year of the phased implementation program, in the event that Capital funding is made available in the next four-to-five years.
- 5. Secondary schools that want to proceed in advance of the phased implementation plan should be permitted to install a digital sign. The electrical and data connection costs, within the building to the exterior sign, should continue to be covered by the School Renewal Program.
 - 6. Signage can be vandalized and repairs are costly. Currently the Maintenance budget has a limited amount of funds set aside for graffiti removal and signage repairs. Consideration should be given to providing additional funding within the Schools Operation budget to adequately support the repair and maintenance of all signage in the future, as this program is implemented system-wide.
 - 7. In some cases, the digital signage LED reader board can be removed and re-installed at another location – though a new City of Toronto sign permit would be required to install at a new location. Removal and re-installation costs should be factored into the overall cost of relocating a sign.

E. ACTION PLAN

- 1. Identify the phased list of secondary schools, based on the priorities detailed in this report. List to be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, subject to changes in Capital priorities or Renewal funding. Implement signage firstly at under-subscribed secondary schools, followed by fully-subscribed schools.
- 2. Initiate discussion with the City of Toronto to request pre-approval of sign design in order to fast track permit applications (similar process exists with building permit process for portable classrooms).

F. IMPLEMENTATION, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

1. Provide a letter to all secondary school principals for distribution to the Catholic School Parent Association (CSPC) regarding approval of the phased digital signage program, indicating the list of schools and anticipated installation date/year.
2. For those secondary schools where the main entrance and the digital signage may be located on a residential street, provide an information letter to the neighboring properties and provide the local Trustee with responses, prior to initiating the project.
3. As per the Board's Good Neighbour Policy, issue a letter to neighbouring properties prior to the start of construction.
4. Provide the Board with an annual update regarding the status of the program and upon completion of the secondary school roll-out.
5. Provide the Board with a similar phased implementation plan to install ground-mount, non-illuminated signage with interchangeable letters at elementary schools. Funding allocation to be identified in the next School Renewal Program for 2018 – 2020.

G. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That a phased digital signage program be initiated for secondary schools, as detailed in the report, to be funded in the amount of \$250,000.00 a year, as part of the School Renewal Program, starting 2018/2019.
2. That the phasing of the secondary schools be prioritized as detailed in the report, starting with under-subscribed schools and/or schools with approved site improvement projects.
3. That the Board continue to allow school communities to raise funds to cover the costs for school signage, meeting Board specifications, and that the electrical and digital connection costs for digital signage be covered under the School Renewal Program.
4. That the Chair of the Board send a letter to the Mayor of Toronto, requesting that the City of Toronto permit fee for school signage be waived.
5. That the Board approve a standard sign design for elementary schools, as per the sample sign provided in Appendix A.