

TO: CITY MANAGER

1997 April 30

FROM: INFORMATION SERVICES DIRECTOR

File: I53-27

SUBJECT: THE YEAR 2000 AND COMPUTER SYSTEMS

PURPOSE: To inform Council of the status of Burnaby's computer systems relative to the change of the millennium.

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

Summary:

Much has been written about the problem computer systems have accommodating the year 2000. This report summarizes the situation in Burnaby and details the plan to address the problem. Burnaby's Year 2000 plan meets with the approval of the external auditors and is being implemented ahead of schedule.

REPORT

Most older computer systems were written using a two-digit year to save storage space on the computer. For example, in some computer systems 04-25-97 is used to represent April 25, 1997. These computer systems will have a problem after December 31, 1999. As the millennium changes computers with two digit years will represent January 1, 2000 as 01-01-00. The computer will not be able to tell if the 01-01-00 date is referring to 1900 or 2000. This problem will not occur in computer systems which use a 4-digit year.

The date recognition problem will not occur in all computer systems. Typically it only affects older computer systems which were written when storage was very expensive and saving two characters on every transaction was critical. These old computer systems will have to be modified or replaced before December 31, 1999. This problem affects every business and government in the World and has become known as the Year 2000 problem.

The Year 2000 problem was identified in Information Services some time ago and a plan has been developed to provide a solution. Burnaby's recommended Year 2000 plan uses the approach that our external auditors, Deloitte and Touche, calls the "fixed window technique". This approach specifies a cutoff year when dates will be calculated as the new century. For example, years higher than 50 will be interpreted as being in the 20th century and years less than 50 will be interpreted as being in the 21st century. (ie. the year 51 will be 1951 and the year 49 will be 2049.) This approach is easier and cheaper to implement than other approaches to the Year 2000 problem.

The implementation of our plan to fix the Year 2000 problem is well underway. Modifications to our internal computer systems (where necessary) is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. (This is well ahead of the schedule recommended by Deloitte and Touche which specifies testing in 1998 and implementation in 1999.) Discussions are underway with suppliers of external computer systems to ensure that those systems will be fixed (where necessary) before the end of 1998.

This report has been prepared in response to the growing number of accounts in the media regarding the Year 2000 problem and has been provided for the information of Council.



R. Taylor  
INFORMATION SERVICES DIRECTOR