

LiveSmart Community Heroes

COMPUTERS TURNING TO GREENER ENVIRONMENT



Chris Slattery – BlueCurl president

BlueCurl, a Langley company nominated for Langley MP Mark Warawa's 2008 Environmental Hero award, has provided cost, energy, and environmental savings on communication and information technology.

In September 2007, the company installed Canada's first carbon-neutral computer lab at a school in Kimberley. Using California-based NComputing's desktop virtualization technology, which allows multiple workstations to run off the unused computing power of one PC tower, BlueCurl was able to replace the lab's 28 PCs with four more efficient computer towers, while retaining 28 separate computer workstations.

BlueCurl president and CEO Chris Slattery said the change provided significant energy savings. Fewer computers meant the school lab no longer required its massive 21-square foot air-conditioning unit.

"You take that out of the equation, and you take 28 PCs drawing in the neighbourhood of 150 watts each and replace them with four PCs drawing 50 watts each, that's quite significant," he said.

As the LCD monitors at each station only require 25 watts each, and the X300 device used at each station only draws 0.5 watts, Slattery calculates that the lab saves 3,286 watts of power with its new workstations.

The company made the lab truly carbon-neutral by planting four trees – enough to offset the lab's projected greenhouse gas output for the next 10 years.

Several other schools in Kimberley followed suit, Slattery said.

Since then, BlueCurl has provided green computer solutions for schools and districts in Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as some closer to home, in Burnaby and Vancouver, and Cloverdale Catholic School. Slattery said the new workstation setup typically saves each school 60 to 70 per cent in overall fiscal costs and up to 90 per cent on their energy bill.

In Langley, the company has installed 10 eco-friendly computer workstations in a lab at D.W. Poppy Secondary School, and is negotiating with Langley School District about putting them in other schools.

One of BlueCurl's biggest clients to date has been the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, where 1,000 computers are being replaced with 100 PCs and 900 access terminals – expected to save the department 267,570 kilowatts of electricity per year, and cutting energy bills by 60 per cent – \$170,000 – annually.

The department is expected to save more than \$3 million over six years after the lessened energy bills, lower maintenance costs and the cheaper prices of replacement workstations as compared to replacement PCs are taken into effect.

The new workstation solution is expected to save the equivalent of 158 barrels of oil annually, and produce 846 metric tons less carbon dioxide over five years than an all-PC environment.

Slattery said the green computer market is a quickly-expanding portion of his company's overall sales.

"Right now, it's about 10 to 15 per cent of our business," he said. "It will grow, definitely."

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