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VanCity consolidates storage environment

3/19/2003 5:00:00 PM - Credit union seeks to triple disk space, increase capacity tenfold

by *Shane Schick*

With the RRSP season safely behind it, Canada's largest credit union is back on track with a project to consolidate its storage environment.

Vancouver City Savings Credit Union (VanCity) said it has already completed the conversion

of six branches to the two **EMC** Clariion CX600 that will be managed from its two data centres. By summer, it hopes to centralize the rest of its 100 data stores into one storage area network (SAN). The company said the infrastructure renewal project will triple its disk space while increasing its growth capacity 10 times over. **Inventure Solutions**, VanCity's wholly-owned IT subsidiary, is deploying the SAN.

Inventure Solutions vice-president of technology infrastructures Tony Fernandes said the project began about two years ago when the company decided it could save costs and better protect its data by moving to a SAN. Like many large organizations, VanCity had adopted a decentralized model in which each of its more than 40 locations had its own local area network, its own mail servers, and its own file and print requirements.

The credit union had most recently been running a five-year-old SAN based on EMC's Symmetrix product, Fernandes said. "It was intended to ensure the availability and reliability of our core systems, but most of the other types of data would have been stored locally," he said. "With the price/performance increase over the last few years -- there was a probably a tenfold drop in the cost of a terabyte -- that really opens a cost-effective solution to doing things differently."

EMC Canada area manager Ross Allen said there are other business factors besides cost that can benefit financial sector clients.

"The primary driver around the consolidation effort is increasing the storage utilization assets that they already have," he said. "We've found that in a storage area network that they can double the amount of storage on a storage area network."

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The consolidation will include transactional banking systems, VanCity's 481 automatic teller machines, telephone banking, customer relationship management and point-of-sale systems. The company will be using EMC's SnapView software to replicate production data and MirrorView to ensure availability of images.

"If you have 100 stores of data that you have to manage, then when you try to do disaster recovery, that makes it quite a challenge," Fernandes said.

Allen said complexity won't be an issue as the storage is centralized.

"The CX has a common tool that will allow them to effectively increase about 10 times the amount of storage they have today without changing any of the existing hardware, except for adding drive units," he said. "That in turn gives you some scalability without in

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