

Pension fund dumps legacy for Oracle tools

4/17/2003 5:00:00 PM

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<http://www.itbusiness.ca/it/client/en/Home/News.asp?id=2758&bSearch=True>

Labourers' Pension Fund of Central and Eastern Canada is beginning a 16-month process that may eventually allow members to avoid mailing or phoning in changes to their plan.

The fund said it was working with Toronto-based Procace Consulting to replace an eight-year-old legacy Cobalt system with a Web-based Pension Administration System built on the Oracle9i Database and Oracle9i Application Server. The two organizations expect to complete the implementation by June 2004.

The 31-year-old LPF of Central and Eastern Canada has more than 39,000 members with \$1 billion in assets. It represents members from five different provinces and 20 local unions, processing payments to nearly 10,000 pensioners and beneficiaries a month.

LPF administrator David D'Agostini said the fund was looking for a system that would take them into the next 15 to 20 years.

"There was a lot of structured programming involved," he said of the legacy system. "It was a lot of work every time we wanted any sort of manipulation on the data to reformat the programs."

Procace senior vice-president of sales Eric Farquharson said the LPF's custom application will allow members to track their own records and pension data in real-time. LPF will roll the system out to its system administrators first, get the system stable and then allow self-service for the pensioners, he said.

"You're dealing with personnel information and personal information," he said.

Training on the system involves both the senior executive team so that they understand what they will get out of it as well as the operational level, Farquharson said. Procace regularly conducts training with local firm The Learning Tree.

"We normally do a certain amount of formal training along with an osmosis-type of training as we work together," he said. "There's also a transition period where normally Procace would provide a support contract to provide the some of the detailed DBA-type level training, setting up backup and recovery systems."

D'Agostini said about 35 people will handle the system on a regular basis.

"Definitely we hope to see some cost savings, but productivity is a main concern," he said. "We want to streamline a lot of our internal processes, eliminate a lot of manual intervention that we have to do right now."

Procace said it would be dedicating five to 12 people to LPF over the course of the project.

