

2023 Report on the Information Management Branch

BACKGROUND

Information, like time and money, is a City asset that must be managed as such. Robust recordkeeping directly supports decisions and decision making, business efficiency, business continuity, Duty to Document obligations, ATIP requests, litigation and audit responses, legislative compliance, risk management, the Employee Code of Conduct key pillars of accountability and transparency, and strengthening trust and confidence in the City.

The Information Management Branch (IM) is responsible for establishing and promoting an overall framework for the coordinated and cost-effective management of the Official Business Records (OBRs) and information holdings of the Corporation of the City of Ottawa, regardless of form (i.e., physical or electronic) and throughout their entire life cycle, to ensure:

- that all records and information holdings are managed as corporate assets to support effective decision making, meet operational requirements (such as supporting the achievement of corporate strategic and program/service delivery priorities), protect and enforce legal and other rights and obligations including the public's right to access under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), and provide evidence of the City's decisions, directives, and actions essential for government transparency and accountability;
- that the widest possible use is made of information within the City by ensuring it is organized to facilitate access to those who require it, at the right time, in the right form, and at a reasonable cost, subject to legal, policy and other constraints;
- that records and information holdings in all formats are retained only as long as needed, stored in the most appropriate and cost-effective storage medium and securely disposed of when no longer required to control costs; and
- that records and information holdings serve to reconstruct the evolution of policy and program decisions and directives or have historical or archival importance are identified and preserved.

The overall framework includes policies, procedures, systems and standards that establish operating requirements. These give direction to management and staff, providing guidance and tools to facilitate the management of the entire life cycle of the City's records and information, namely:

- planning;
- collection, creation and receipt;
- organization, use and retrieval;

- storage, protection, retention, and disposition through transfer to the Archives Branch or secure, authorized destruction; and
- centralized records and information management resource support to program areas to enable them to meet their Information Management operating requirements.

More specifically, IM helps all City staff meet their current and evolving physical and electronic records management obligations by:

- Maintaining 14 records offices in five City buildings and supporting 219 decentralized records locations;
- Maintaining the corporate Records Management Policy and Procedures, the Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS), and the associated *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* No. 2021-183, as amended;
- Securely disposing of records in accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* No. 2021-183, as amended, and applicable federal and provincial legislation;
- Providing guidance on the Information Architecture (IA) of client SharePoint sites to assist with records compliance, information organization and content aggregation, security, search, reporting and usability;
- Providing expertise in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of IM policies, procedures, information organization and best practices;
- Providing Tier 1 and 2 system support for three records management systems;
- Training staff on the RMS records management system, BIMS, SharePoint and IM fundamentals; and
- Assessing business-specific systems for records-related risk.

Three policy instruments

IM is responsible for three policy instruments that direct City staff on how to manage their records:

1. **Records Management Policy and Procedures** identifies requirements and expectations regarding the creation, identification, and management of City records.
2. **Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS)** is a tool that helps organize City records, as well as applies a schedule detailing how long records are kept and how they should be securely disposed.
3. ***Records Retention and Disposition By-law*** provides the City with the legal authority to create, manage, and securely dispose of records. The Archives Branch is the disposition authority for the City of Ottawa and IM staff work in close collaboration with Archives staff.

Four recordkeeping systems

The City currently uses four information management systems to manage records:

1. Records Management System (RMS) is used to manage physical records. As described below, the platform software version was updated, and a new version was released in early 2023. A technology renewal project will start in 2024 to replace this key IM tool.
2. Business Information Management System (BIMS) is used to manage electronic records. As described below, BIMS has reached end of life and a technology renewal project started in 2019.
3. Records365 (R365) is being used to add recordkeeping functionality to SharePoint sites. The R365 application, applied to SharePoint sites, is intended to replace BIMS.
4. MINISIS controls certain records that have been archived. This system is managed by the Archives Branch.

Staffing challenges

As noted in previous annual reports, new applications and technology are constantly appearing across the organization. Council has also directed staff to develop additional measures to improve information management and routine disclosure on major City projects, identified through the process of responding to the Ottawa Light Rail Public Inquiry. In the [Office of the City Clerk 2022 Annual Report](#), to address the ongoing challenges and other work required to meet recordkeeping requirements, staff recommended Council approve the addition of two temporary Full-Time Equivalent positions (FTEs) for the IM Branch. These two FTEs were not included in the 2024 Budget, but the positions were extended on a temporary basis for 2024. The Office of the City Clerk will continue to work with the Finance and Corporate Services Department with the goal of including the positions in the 2025 Budget.

KEY PROJECTS

1. Records Management System (RMS) is used to manage physical records. The platform software version was updated, and a new version was released in early 2023. The new version brought stability while appearing identical to RMS clients, and met the goal of minimizing change management, staff training and end-user disruption. In Q4 2023, ITS advised that RMS is again at risk. A technology renewal project will start in 2024 to replace this key business tool.
2. BIMS is used to manage electronic records and is being replaced with SharePoint and an additional recordkeeping add-on called Records365 (R365). This technology renewal project requires the remediation of SharePoint information architecture (IA) to improve usability and search and to make sites 'records ready', in order to assign retention and disposition rules. SharePoint sites are currently being brought under record management compliance by R365, one site at a time. The project includes:

- Evaluating and documenting each SharePoint site, making changes and updates to the Information Architecture (IA);
 - Classifying the content of each library and building retention rules using R365;
 - Migrating BIMS OBRs, associated metadata and security controls to the relevant client SharePoint sites;
 - Coaching and training staff, to enable long-term SharePoint adoption and ensure appropriate use; and
 - Providing ongoing support and guidance as changing operational needs result in required adjustments to SharePoint sites.
3. Implementing recommendations from the staff report titled, "[Update on Ottawa Light Rail Transit Public Inquiry and Recommended Next Steps](#)," which Council considered on November 9, 2022, including as follows:
- The City Clerk consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) with regard to establishing clear guidelines and processes with respect to temporary records, including transitory records created on instant messaging and social media platforms related to City business, for both staff and elected officials and on both personal and corporate devices and accounts. The IPC responded with a letter that provided publicly available resources and orders issued by the IPC.
 - Amended the Records Management Policy and Procedures and include recordkeeping requirements for large-scale infrastructure projects. This update includes two policy appendices, titled, "Recordkeeping Requirements for Large-Scale Infrastructure Projects," and, "Records Management Checklist for Departing Employees and Contracted Staff from a Large-Scale Infrastructure Project."
 - Developed guidance for temporary records created on instant messaging applications and messaging on social media platforms.
 - Continued to identify and communicate the value of recordkeeping by embedding recordkeeping in City foundational documents and business processes. The following documents were updated:
 - Business Case and Project Management Policy – this was to clarify that information management is to be considered at the start of during and at the close of all large-scale infrastructure projects and includes a comprehensive Records Management Plan;
 - Manager Checklist for Departing Employees and;
 - Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guide.
 - Developed IM Branch workplan.

BUSINESS STATISTICS

Some key statistics for 2023 are:

- Over 4.9 million physical records were managed in RMS, the physical records system, with 62,879 new records created;
- 1.5 million records were onboarded to R365 and are under policy compliance;
- 593,071 electronic records were checked into BIMS, with 6.9 million electronic records in total;
- 785 staff took IM training courses on SharePoint Basics, records management systems, and the fundamentals of records classification;
- 140 amendments were made to the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* No. 2021-183, as amended. IM made 136 changes to align with changes in business process, federal and provincial legislation or industry best practice. The Archives Branch made four changes to its Continuous Disposition Authorities appraisals;
- Approximately 17,691 physical records and 2,095 records boxes were ordered back from commercial off-site storage for staff to consult;
- In accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* and with departmental approval, 72,461 physical records were authorized to be securely destroyed and 11,107 records boxes were transferred to the Archives Branch; and
- 1,289 technical support calls for metadata and security access control updates and organization change were processed.

INITIATIVES FOR 2024 AND BEYOND

New RMS

A technology renewal project will start in 2024 to replace this key business tool. The application is integrated into most lines of business and manages a total of 4.9 million records with over 600 users. Examples of records managed include Employment and Financial Assistance case files, Sexual Health Clinic records, building permits, Fire Services inspections and investigations, etc.

Ongoing R365 rollout and decommissioning of BIMS

Bringing SharePoint sites under R365 records policy compliance continues. This includes an additional sub-project to migrate BIMS OBRs, associated metadata and security controls to the relevant client SharePoint sites.

Technology is now outpacing Information Governance

As noted in previous annual reports, new applications and new technology are constantly appearing across the organization. This poses challenges from a recordkeeping, duty to document perspective and from an access to information perspective. One example in 2023 is new self-serve automations (power automate

workflows and approvals). IM is developing recordkeeping guidance for these decision making workflows that are often stored in the cloud. The City Clerk continues to monitor this situation in partnership with various stakeholders.

Record migration service

The IM Branch will work with ITS to provide a new migration service to facilitate the transfer of records and associated metadata into SharePoint sites with a new tool called Sharegate.

Continue to implement recordkeeping and information governance recommendations from the staff report titled, “Update on the Ottawa Light Rail Transit Public Inquiry and Recommended Next Steps”

- Issue policy guidance on temporary records created on instant messaging applications and on social media platforms in the Records Management Policy and the Responsible Computing Policy, in partnership with the Finance and Corporate Services Department.
- Continue to identify and communicate the value of recordkeeping by embedding requirements in City foundational documents and business processes.
- Develop mandatory IM training for staff working in large-scale infrastructure projects.
- Ensure that IM is considered at the start of, during and at the close of all large-scale infrastructure projects and includes a comprehensive Records Management Plan and Information Governance Plan for each project.

CAPSTONE – Automated Capture of Senior Leaders Decision Records

The volume, variety and velocity of emails sent and received by Senior Leadership Team (SLT) offices are overwhelming, making the manual task of properly registering emails as records difficult. This approach is from the [National Archives and Records Administration](#) and refers to the apex stone on a pyramid, as the email accounts of Senior Leadership act like a capstone on business activity. IM is to conduct a feasibility review on leveraging automation to capture and preserve emails from identified SLT members to support:

- Strengthening trust and confidence in the City;
- Employee Code of Conduct key pillars of accountability and transparency; and
- The IPC obligation of ‘Duty to Document’ which focuses on key decisions and decision making, based on role and delegated authority.

These projects and activities will be worked on throughout 2024.