

2025 Annual 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, access to information and privacy (ATIP) requests, litigation and audit responses, legislative compliance, risk management, and the Employee Code of Conduct’s key pillars of accountability and transparency. Together, these practices strengthen public trust in the City's work.

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 and information holdings 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 that serve to reconstruct the evolution of policy and program decisions and directives, or that 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 City of Ottawa Archives 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 13 records offices in five City buildings and supporting 202 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* (By-law No. 2021-183, as amended);
- Securely disposing of records in accordance with the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law* and applicable federal and provincial legislation;
- Providing guidance on the information architecture 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 Records Management System (RMS), 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. The **Records Management Policy and Procedures** identifies requirements and expectations regarding the creation, identification and management of City records.
2. The **Corporate Records Classification Scheme (CRCS)** is a tool that helps organize City records, and applies a schedule detailing how long records are kept and how they should be securely disposed.
3. The ***Records Retention and Disposition By-law*** provides the City with the legal authority to create, manage and securely dispose of records. The City Archives 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, a technology renewal project started in 2025 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 is being replaced.
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. **Collections Management System** controls certain records that have been archived. This system, which is managed by the Archives Branch, is currently being decommissioned and its contents are being migrated to a new system.

IM BRANCH WORK PROGRAM AND KEY PROJECTS

Pressures impacting Information Management

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, following the recommendations arising from the Ottawa Light Rail Public Inquiry. Concurrently, system decommissioning and replacements, the ongoing R365 rollout, and participation in the Citywide Data Strategy continue to stretch staff's capacity to support multiple, ongoing priorities.

KEY PROJECTS

1. The 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, Information Technology Services advised that RMS is again at risk. A technology renewal project started in Q4 2025 to replace this key business tool.
2. The Business Information Management System (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 to make sites 'records ready,' which includes improving usability, search functionality, and assigning retention and disposition rules. SharePoint sites are currently being brought under records 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;
 - Classifying the content of each library and building retention rules using R365;
 - Migrating BIMS records, 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 results in required adjustments to SharePoint sites.
3. Implementing the recommendations from the staff report titled, "[Update on the Ottawa Light Rail Transit Public Inquiry and Recommended Next Steps](#)":
- Information Management updated the Records Management Policy for clarity and alignment with current practices. Specifically, the Instant Messaging and Social Media section was amended to align with Information Technology Services by including RCS as a recognized form of text messaging, and to clarify the process for managing signed acceptable-use directives. In addition, the Workflows and Business Automations section was revised to include the Microsoft Power Platform to ensure the policy reflects the available automation capabilities.
 - Continue to identify and communicate the value of recordkeeping by embedding recordkeeping in City foundational documents and business processes. The following documents were updated:
 - AI Security Policy
 - Data Security Policy
 - Purchase Orders under \$25k Procedure
 - Purchasing Card Policy and Purchasing Card Procedures
 - User Fees and Charges Policy
4. Implementing mandatory IM training for identified employees to enhance risk management, accountability, transparency and documentation protocols across the City. In Q1 2023, an environmental scan of Canadian municipalities, universities, school boards and hospitals (MUSH) sector was completed to identify best practices in online IM training. Learning objectives have been defined and staff have been working with the City's Learning Centre. In Q1 2024, the Learning Centre identified the need to update the IM Fundamentals Online course for accessibility and currency. IM staff developed revised course materials in Q2-Q3 2024 and the Learning Centre completed the first draft of the course storyboard in Q4 2024. Course content and storyboard revisions were finalized in 2025. User testing and accessibility testing are planned for Q1 2026. IM will collaborate with Information Technology Services and Human Resources Services to secure course approval and distribute communications to the Senior Leadership Team and City employees.

KEY STATISTICS

Some key statistics for 2025 are:

- Over 4.5 million physical records were managed in RMS, the physical records system, with 43,632 new records created.
- 3.8 million electronic records were onboarded to R365 for a total of 7.3 million records under policy compliance.
- 145,264 electronic records were checked into BIMS, with a total of 7.6 million electronic records migrated from BIMS to SharePoint.
- 414 staff took IM training courses on SharePoint Basics, RMS and the fundamentals of records classification.
- 38 amendments were made to the *Records Retention and Disposition By-law*. IM implemented these changes to align with business processes, federal and provincial legislation and/or industry best practice.
- Approximately 18,208 physical records and 1,252 boxes of records 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, 147,187 physical records were authorized to be securely destroyed. 11,284 boxes of records were permanently removed from Iron Mountain.
- 550 technical support calls for metadata and security access control updates and organization changes were processed.

INITIATIVES FOR 2026 AND BEYOND

RMS replacement project

As noted above, a technology renewal project started in Q4 2025 to replace this key business tool. The application is integrated into most lines of business and manages a total of 4.5 million physical records in more than 230 locations across the City 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. IM has initiated preliminary market research for the RMS replacement. Once three vendors are identified, requests for proposals and quotes will be issued. The estimated timeline will be eight to 15 months. Although budget discussions have not yet occurred, it is anticipated that Information Technology Services or IM will experience budget pressure.

Ongoing R365 rollout and decommissioning of BIMS

Bringing SharePoint sites under R365 records policy compliance continues. This work includes an additional sub-project to migrate the entire BIMS repository, including Official Business Records, temporary records, associated metadata and security controls to the appropriate client SharePoint sites.

Citywide Data Strategy

The Office of the City Clerk has been working collaboratively with colleagues from other departments to develop a Citywide Data Strategy. IM is a Departmental Data Governance Lead and is supporting several of the initiatives that will be rolled out through this multi-year project designed to make the best use of the City of Ottawa's data assets to achieve the City's strategic objectives.

Information governance

IM is supporting information governance through the OLRT Recordkeeping Requirements for Large-Scale Infrastructure Projects. Work is ongoing on the Ādisōke project including the development of a records management plan and an information governance plan, as well as the ongoing implementation of 'records ready' SharePoint hubs and sites. In 2026, similar work will begin for the Lansdowne 2.0 project.

Technology is outpacing information governance

As noted in previous annual reports, new applications and modern technology are constantly appearing across the organization. This poses challenges from a recordkeeping perspective, a duty to document perspective, and an access to information perspective. The City Clerk continues to monitor this situation in partnership with various stakeholders.

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](#)"

- 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 offices are overwhelming, making the manual task of properly registering emails as records difficult. The capstone method is an approach 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. In 2025, IM conducted a feasibility review and determined that the connectors required to capture these emails would require a type of access that IT Security does not allow because of security risks.

Nevertheless, IM will continue to offer guidance to senior leaders and their offices on how to capture Official Business Records in support of:

- Strengthening trust and confidence in the City;
- Employee Code of Conduct's key pillars of accountability and transparency;
and
- Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario obligation of "duty to document" which focuses on key decisions and decision-making, based on role and delegated authority.