

Practical Tips on *Managing Information*

Need assistance? Contact corporaterecords@burlington.ca

For more information go to 360.burlington.ca



Information is one of the City's most valuable assets. Like the work that goes into ensuring other City assets are safe and in good condition, the City of Burlington has legislative requirements in the *Municipal Act* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* to maintain the information we collect, create or handle. We call this practice, information management (IM).

Developing consistent and uniform information management habits across the organization is critical in helping the City of Burlington to:

- find information quickly and easily
- leverage and analyze information that is timely and relevant
- reduce duplication
- protect the personal information of our customers
- protect the City's reputation.

What is information?

The City uses the ARMA definition of information. "Any content (unstructured electronic records, physical records, video, voicemail messages, text and instant messages, website, intranet and social media content) and data (structured in a database or in the Cloud)".

What is a record?

The City uses the MFIPPA definition of record. "Any record however recorded, whether in printed form, on film, by electronic means, or otherwise". Records can be corporate or transitory in nature.

Corporate records refer to records that provide evidence of a business decision and are necessary for legal, financial, operational, historical or archival requirements. These records should be retained and disposed of according to the City of Burlington Records Retention Bylaw.

Transitory records refer to records that have a short-term or temporary usefulness and should be deleted when they are no longer needed. You do not need to document the destruction of transitory records.

Use the "Keep It or Pitch It" tool on 360 to follow steps to manage your information.

Records Retention Schedule

A records retention schedule is a policy that defines how long corporate records must be kept based on legal, legislative, industry and operations requirements. It indicates how the record should be disposed of at the end of its lifecycle. The City's Records Retention Schedule was approved by By-law 5-2015. It is available on 360.

The Lifecycle

There are four distinct phases of the lifecycle of records and information: create, use, maintain, and disposition.

Create refers to the creation of a record, but also when the City receives a new record from an external source such as a customer, vendor or other third party.

Use refers to the sharing of information with staff to collaborate and use the record to make key business decisions and provide service delivery.

Maintain includes two phases. Active, the period where a record is being used, modified, on a regular basis or inactive if referred to less than once every year.

Disposition refers to the destination, typically, either destroyed by shredding when the retention is met or kept permanently.



Corporate Repositories

When information is not managed through its lifecycle, the volume of information increases, there's duplication and confirming accuracy is difficult. This results in increased search time to find the source of truth. The quality of the information may be poor, which limits customer service, access requests and can cause legal issues.

A corporate repository is a City approved storage location, and can include network drives, enterprise systems and Image Site.

The City has network drives in place to provide storage for electronic documents and files.

S:\1 TEMPORARY: Use for documents and files that are temporary or to share internally, contents will be deleted every 60 days. Can be deleted, changed or read by every city employee

S: Best used for sharing files between departments or across the organization

T:\Dept\: Best used for sharing files within your department, storing active files for departmental initiatives and projects, storing closed/inactive files when a project or service is complete.

H: Best used for storing your own personal/sensitive employee information – e.g. your resume, headshot, career development plans. Not to be used to store corporate records.

Your PC and laptop hard drives are not backed up. Saving records to these places risks corporate knowledge loss and failure.

Practical Tips on *Privacy Protection*

Need assistance? Contact access&privacy@burlington.ca

For more information go to 360.burlington.ca



Email Management

Used properly, email can be an invaluable communication tool, but when it starts to pile up, it can be the cause of disorganization, stress and anxiety. To help combat email overload, it's important to remember we all have a role to play in curbing the explosion of unwanted email.

Consider email etiquette and ask yourself "is an email needed?"

- Don't "reply all" – it adds unnecessary volume, avoid "thank you" emails
- Refrain from cc'ing others "just in case", talk to your colleagues about the types of messages they want to be copied on
- For quick messages that don't need to be retained, consider picking up the phone instead
- Ensure the subject line is clear and concise and keep it professional and avoid opinions, judgements or personal feelings

Emails are records too – who own's the email?

Emails and their attachments may be corporate records if they are made or received in connection with City business. When an email is a transitory record it can be deleted when no longer of use.

Whether corporate or transitory, email records can be disclosed in response to a freedom of information (FOI) request. This means your emails could be shared with the public, published by the media or presented as evidence in court.

When an email is a corporate record, it should be stored in PDF format on a network drive so its protected from loss and its available when needed. To clarify who's responsible for saving email records:

- Sender - when email messages are exchanged within the City, the person who initiated the correspondence is responsible for classifying and filing it.
- Recipient – when an individual receives an email from outside of their institution, the recipient is responsible for its classification.
- Group - where a group of people work together on a project, committee, task force, etc., assign the responsibility for managing all email messages of the group to one individual. Or the group may decide to set up a shared folder into which all members may file emails related to the project, committee, etc.

Naming Conventions

Effective management of electronic records begins with accurate file names. Benefits of consistent file and folder naming are:

- Files are easily distinguished one from another
- File names are easier to browse
- Retrieval is facilitated for all users (not just the file's creator)

The City has naming conventions guidelines on 360.

Inactive Records & Archives

If records are no longer actively being used, you can transfer them off-site by completing the Inactive Storage Service Request and Transmittal sheet on 360. If you need records to be returned a weekly order is placed on Wednesdays. Note: Staff can accommodate next day delivery requests for Urgent FOI or legal discovery requests.

The City of Burlington has a small archive collection that focuses on the history of the City as a corporation and its predecessor municipalities.

Records Destruction

Keeping records longer than necessary is costly to the City and complicates the City's compliance with MFIPPA. Records must be disposed of (i.e. destroyed or transferred to the archives) once the retention period in the Retention Schedule has expired.

To destroy corporate records that have met retention, a Certificate of Destruction form must be authorized by the departmental Director. Use the Certificate of Destruction form on 360.

Where records pertain to an ongoing or reasonably foreseeable legal action or other investigation, you may be approached by Legal staff to keep the records under the Legal Holds process. For steps to follow, use the Legal Holds process on 360.

Information Governance Committee

To assist in having an enterprise-wide understanding and oversight of our information assets, the City has an Information Governance (IG) Committee.

The role of the IGC is to hold the organization accountable to create, organize, secure, maintain, use and dispose of information in ways that align with and contribute to the organization's goals.

For membership, meeting materials, and Terms visit 360.