

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE APRIL 20, 2010

TRANSITORY RECORDS RETENTION & DISPOSITION GUIDELINES

Recommendation

The City Clerk recommends:

- 1) That the City of Vaughan Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines set out at Attachment 1 be approved.

Contribution to Sustainability

By providing staff with guidance and authority in the retention and timely disposal of records with temporary value, the *Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines* increase the Corporation's records storage capacity, while contributing to the accessibility of significant business information by minimizing the quantity of general records that must be managed. By reducing the quantity of active hardcopy records maintained by Departments, the subject guidelines contribute to environmental sustainability and support LEEDS facility design principles.

Economic Impact

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Communications Plan

Upon approval by Council, the *Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines* will be disseminated to staff. The subject guidelines will also be uploaded to the City's intranet site.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval of the *City of Vaughan Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines* that provide City staff with guidance in identifying routine records with only temporary business value and authorize staff to dispose of such transitory records when no longer required.

Background - Analysis and Options

Scope of Proposed Guidelines

While transitory records exist in all media and formats, the subject guidelines relate to hardcopy records. Electronic transitory records, including e-mail of temporary value, will be addressed in future policies and procedures for managing digital information.

Records Management Context

The management, preservation, security and provision of access to Corporate records and information are central to municipal business efficiency, public accountability, and government transparency. This is achieved at the City through a comprehensive Archives and Records Management system. A key function of this system is ensuring the timely disposal of records no longer required to support business and legal requirements. This optimizes storage capacity, minimizes retrieval and storage costs, and ensures the accessibility of significant information by keeping records quantities to manageable levels. Records disposition is governed by the City's Records Retention By-law which details all of the record classes created and maintained by the City and assigns a unique retention period commensurate with business or legal value to each.

Once the retention period of a given class of records expires, it is capable of being destroyed. Records determined to possess long-term business and legal value are retained permanently and managed by the City Archives.

Assisting With Immediate Operational Needs

Archives & Records Management Services (ARMS) is engaged in a number of ongoing, long and short-term initiatives to provide the Corporation with the most effective and up to date records management systems, processes, and services. An immediate priority is to support City staff in relocating to the new Civic Centre. To minimize the quantity of records needing to be moved and in consideration of limited active records storage space in the new facility, ARMS has assisted City staff in identifying and relocating non-essential records to inactive storage at the Records Centre located in the JOC over the last several months. A further reduction of active records in City Departments can be achieved through the timely disposal of transitory records by City staff. Transitory records (also known as “unofficial” records) are documents having only temporary business value and include draft documents, working material such as research notes and calculations, duplicates, circulation copies, advertising material, external publications, etc. The *City of Vaughan Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines* will enable and authorize City staff to identify and dispose of transitory records, in a manner appropriate to their sensitivity, immediately after they are no longer required for business purposes.

The City’s Records Retention By-law is currently being revised and integrated with a function-based records classification plan that will improve how City records are created, filed and retrieved. Until this long-term initiative is completed, the subject transitory records guidelines offer a timely, effective, and proactive means to assist City staff in purging routine records in anticipation of pending relocation and new space considerations. The transitory records guidelines may be incorporated into the City’s revised Records Retention By-law upon finalization of the latter.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

The proposed initiative is consistent with the following elements of Vaughan Vision 2020:

1. Service Excellence – Pursue Excellence in Service Delivery
2. Management Excellence – Enhance Productivity, Cost Effectiveness and Innovation

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

The approval of the *City of Vaughan Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines* will assist in reducing the quantity of active records managed by Departments by providing staff with guidelines to identify and authority to dispose of transitory records. This will increase Departmental records storage capacity and help to ensure the accessibility of significant information by contributing to keeping records quantities to manageable levels. Reduced records volumes will also ease relocation to the new Civic Centre, and assist in maximizing records storage space in the new facility.

Attachments

City of Vaughan Transitory Records Retention & Disposition Guidelines

Report prepared by:

Dan Zelenyj, M.A.
City Archivist

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey A. Abrams
City Clerk

CITY OF VAUGHAN TRANSITORY RECORDS RETENTION & DISPOSITION GUIDELINES

I) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Purpose

To provide guidance and authorization to City staff relating to the retention and disposal of records with temporary value.

2. Authority

The disposal of transitory records is authorized by Council in accordance with Section 255 of the Ontario Municipal Act.

3. Transitory Records Defined

Transitory records (also known as “unofficial records”) are documents in any media or format having only temporary usefulness. These records are created and received in the conduct of City business but possess no value beyond an immediate minor transaction or the creation of a subsequent record. Transitory records are of such short-term value that they are not required to satisfy statutory, legal, and financial obligations, or provide evidence of decisions and operational and administrative activities.

4. Official Records Defined

All other records, regardless of media or format, created or received in the conduct of City business are Official Records and must be retained. In general, official records have ongoing value because they document and support business activities and decision-making. Official records are subject to the City's Records Retention By-law and must be retained by City business units while needed to support business activities and then transferred to Archives and Records Management Services for inactive management or permanent retention. **City Staff may not dispose of Official Records. Official records may only be disposed of at the expiry of their retention periods, and then only by Archives & Records Management Services staff.**

5. Records Media and Format

While transitory records exist in all media and formats, this schedule applies to hardcopy records. Policies and procedures for the management of digital records and information are pending.

6. Retention Period & Disposing of Transitory Records

Transitory records shall be retained from time of creation or receipt until such time that their immediate business use has elapsed. Once determined to have no further business value (i.e. once superseded or obsolete), transitory records may be routinely disposed of (i.e. destroyed) by City staff using methods appropriate to their sensitivity, confidentiality, and personal information content (destruction takes the form of recycling or shredding). Records containing sensitive, confidential, or personal information, even a seemingly trivial document such as a telephone message, **must** be shredded. Open and unrestricted records may be recycled.

7. Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)

Transitory records responsive to MFIPPA requests must not be disposed of until the request has been processed. The City's Access & Privacy Office will alert staff as required.

8. Help Managing Transitory Records

Staff are encouraged to consult Archives and Records Management Services if they require assistance with any aspect of managing their transitory or official records.

II) IDENTIFYING & DISPOSING OF TRANSITORY RECORDS (CATEGORIES & COMMON TYPES)

The key consideration in identifying a transitory record is determining if it has only immediate or very short-term value to the City and will not be required once it is obsolete. General categories and common types of transitory records are:

1. ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Solicited and unsolicited information received from individuals and businesses advertising or promoting products and services. Examples include:

- Brochures
- Product bulletins
- Company profiles
- Sales letters
- Flyers
- Catalogues and price lists

Excludes: Advertising and promotional material required to document and support activities such as product and price comparisons, and price quotations.

Retention & Disposition: Destroy when superseded by newer version or no longer required

2. BLANK INFORMATION MEDIA

Any type of media that was intended for information collection and storage but was not used. Examples include:

- Blank forms
- Obsolete stationery/letterhead

Retention & Disposition: Destroy immediately if of no use

3. DRAFT DOCUMENTS AND WORKING MATERIALS

Preliminary versions of documents compiled and used in the preparation of final document versions that are no longer required once the final version of a document is completed and filed as a master copy. Also includes working or research material compiled and used in the preparation of documents, but no longer required once the final version of a document is completed.

Examples include:

- Preliminary versions of reports
- Draft internal/external correspondence
- Draft agendas/minutes and other documents
- Comments on drafts of reports, internal/external correspondence, etc. incorporated into final the version
- Notes
- Calculations
- List of points to be considered or included

Excludes: Drafts and working materials showing formal approvals, new decisions, significant changes, or comments providing insight into the development of final document versions may need to be retained. This may occur in business units involved in drafting policy, procedures, legislation, legal

documents, budgets, standards, etc. where there may be a need to track the evolution of a final version of a record.

Retention & Disposition: Destroy when final version of record has been completed and filed.

4. DUPLICATES (EXACT COPIES)

Extra copies of master documents created and used only for convenience reference. To qualify as a duplicate, a record must satisfy three conditions:

- Copy(ies) were made for information or reference purpose only
- Master Version of document has been filed in an official filing system
- *No changes, additions, or deletions deviating from the master copy

Examples of include:

- Reading or circulation copies
- Multiple copies of identical documents within the same file
- Copies of widely distributed material such as guidelines, bulletins, agendas/minutes, etc.

Excludes: Duplicate records maintained for an extended period to support decision-making, administrative or operational activities.

*If changes/additions/deletions are made to a copy of a record, the document is no longer a duplicate and its status as a transitory record must be reassessed. If changes or additions are significant, the document may now be an official record. If not, the document would fall under another transitory records category, such as transitory working material (see Category #3) or information of short-term value (see Category # 6).

Retention & Disposition: Destroy when no longer referred to or actively used

5. EXTERNAL PUBLICATIONS

Publications originating from external sources having no value beyond the short-term.

Examples include:

- Periodicals
- Pamphlets
- Brochures
- Journals
- Newspapers
- Magazines

Retention & Disposition: Destroy when no longer referred to or actively used

6. INFORMATION OF SHORT-TERM VALUE

Records created or received for minor or short-term informational purposes. Examples include:

- Routine memos or notices regarding holidays, special events, etc. distributed to all staff
- Information items not pertaining to your Business Unit or requiring you to act
- Minor administrative messages (e.g. confirmation of meeting times)
- Personal messages and information
- Opened envelopes and routing slips

Retention & Disposition: Destroy when no longer required

III) OFFICIAL RECORDS (GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS)

The key feature of official records is that they document and support business activities (such as program and service delivery) and decision-making. Official records include those documenting:

1. All recommendations and decisions along with complete background documentation
2. All planning and policy activities
3. Legal agreements of any type along with complete supporting documentation
4. Any work performed for the City by consultants and others
5. Interactions with vendors, clients, partners, agents, consultants, etc. – except those relating to routine direction and advice
6. All transactions where payment is made, services are delivered or obligations are incurred
7. Significant phone and face-to-face discussions and conversations
8. ITM & Records Management systems and procedures affecting the ongoing integrity, availability, and security of the City's information.

Retention & Disposition: File and Retain as per City's Records Retention By-law

NOTE: IF IN DOUBT ABOUT THE STATUS OF A RECORD (IS IT TRANSITORY OR IS IT OFFICIAL?), RETAIN THE DOCUMENT AND CONTACT ARCHIVES & RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES STAFF FOR ASSISTANCE