

ANNUAL REPORT of the Chief Records Officer

2023/24



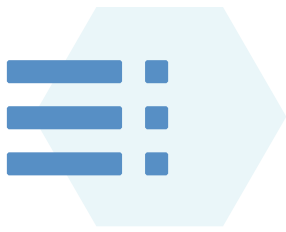


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Minister's Message



February 19, 2025

The Honourable Raj Chouhan
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to present to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia a report of the Chief Records Officer for the 2023/24 fiscal year.

In doing so, I want to acknowledge the hardworking people across the public service whose dedication and commitment to information management is key to ensuring this government is accountable to British Columbians.

Sincerely,

Honourable George Chow
Minister of Citizens' Services

pc: Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

The Importance of Effective Government Information Management

The [Information Management Act \(IMA\)](#) applies to all government ministries and to 39 broader public sector entities. These government bodies create, receive, and manage a significant amount of information related to their work.

Under the IMA, ministries and other government bodies are responsible for creating and maintaining records that adequately document significant decisions.

They are also responsible for ensuring that the records they create or receive in connection with government business are managed using an appropriate recordkeeping system in accordance with the Act and other applicable policy. For ministries, this includes the [Managing Government Information Policy](#).

Information management is crucial for government transparency and accountability. Effective information management has many benefits, including:

- ◆ Supporting the design, development, implementation and evaluation of government programs, services, policies, standards, processes, and procedures;
- ◆ Fostering informed decision making and effective risk management;
- ◆ Facilitating accountability, confidentiality, transparency, and collaboration, allowing government to be more responsive to British Columbians;
- ◆ Maintaining evidence of and information about business activities, transactions, and decisions;
- ◆ Ensuring that government information is preserved for as long as it is required and is appropriately transferred to the government archives if it is determined to have permanent value; and
- ◆ Ensuring the accessibility, discoverability, and usability of information over time.

The Mandate of the Chief Records Officer

The Chief Records Officer (CRO) is designated by the Minister of Citizens' Services under the *Information Management Act* (IMA). Current CRO, Charmaine Lowe, was designated by the Minister on April 4, 2022.

Section 3 of the IMA defines the mandate of the CRO:

- ◆ To promote effective information management by government bodies;
- ◆ To promote the preservation of valuable government information for current and future use;
- ◆ To approve [Information Schedules](#) governing the holding, transferring, archiving, and disposal of government information;
- ◆ To manage the digital archives and promote its availability to the public; and
- ◆ To examine, evaluate, and report on the management of government information by government bodies, and to make recommendations considered advisable.

Information Schedules

Information schedules govern how records are organized, managed, and eventually archived or disposed of.

Information schedules are based on the types of records they apply to, and include:

- ◆ [Administrative Records Classification System \(ARCS\)](#);
- ◆ [Operational Records Classification Systems \(ORCS\)](#); and
- ◆ [Special Schedules](#).

The benefits of effectively managing government information through information schedules include the following:

- ◆ Records with enduring value as evidence of government actions and decisions are identified and managed appropriately;
- ◆ British Columbia's collective recorded memory and heritage is preserved;
- ◆ Records are not retained for longer than necessary, thereby implementing prudent information and financial management; and
- ◆ Decisions about the disposal of government information are transparent, and decision makers can be held accountable for them.

Under section 4 of the IMA, the CRO may approve an Information Schedule if they are satisfied that the *"Information Schedule provides, with as much specificity as practicable, for the disposal of all information required to be disposed of by law and for the holding of all information required to be held by law."*

2023/24 By the Numbers

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the CRO approved seven new or amended Information Schedules:

- 1 British Columbia Lottery Corporation ORCS, amendment 1
- 2 BC Transit ORCS
- 3 Critical Incidents ORCS
- 4 Multiculturalism & Immigrations Services ORCS, amendment 1
- 5 Employment Standards ORCS
- 6 Public Service Personnel Management Services ORCS, amendment 4
- 7 Security Programs ORCS, amendment 2

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Ministry of Citizens' Services received and processed **588 applications** for appraisal under existing Information Schedules, representing over **10,500 boxes of records**.

Information Management Infrastructure

Ministries and government bodies use many systems and applications to support effective information management.

The Enterprise Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) is used in many ministries to manage both electronic and physical records throughout their lifecycle. The Archives and Records Information System (ARIS) is used to manage offsite records and archival holdings.

Government currently stores more than one million boxes of physical records — including records that must be maintained for decades for operational, legal, financial, or other purposes, and records that are permanently retained by the government archives. [Defined facility standards](#) help ensure government records are safe and secure.

2023/24 By the Numbers

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the EDRMS system was:

- ◆ Managing over 22,700,000 electronic documents; and
- ◆ Tracking over 7,700,000 physical file folders and 262,000 boxes of physical records.

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, ARIS was centrally managing **over one million boxes of records**. If placed end to end, these boxes would stretch from Vancouver to Williams Lake.



2023/24 By the Numbers

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the Ministry of Citizens' Services:

- ◆ Processed 3,835 offsite transfer/scheduling requests;
- ◆ Transferred 26,895 new boxes to storage;
- ◆ Destroyed, in accordance with information schedules, 26,595 boxes from storage; and
- ◆ Transferred 3,226 boxes to the custody of the BC Archives.



Policy, Training, and Support

The [Managing Government Information Policy](#) helps ministries understand their information management obligations. This policy contains requirements related to the lifecycle of information, from creation and use to classification, scheduling, and appraisal through to preservation and storage, transfer, or disposal.

The Ministry of Citizens' Services also offers training and support to B.C. Government employees, including online courses, webinars, and one-on-one consultations.



2023/24 By the Numbers

In the 2023/24 fiscal year **6,399** B.C. Public Service employees enrolled in records management training courses.

In addition, six targeted web training opportunities were offered, including “Ask an Expert” panel sessions, workshops, and subject matter expert presentations.

Partnership with the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum (RBCM) processes historically important physical government records for preservation in the BC Archives. The processing involves arrangement, description, and preservation activities.

In early 2022, the Ministry of Citizens' Services and RBCM renewed their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to March 31, 2027. The MOU recognizes the importance of ensuring physical records of historical value are preserved and made accessible to the people of British Columbia. Renewing this agreement emphasizes a mutual commitment to this shared goal.

Digital Archive

The Ministry of Citizens' Services has completed the first stage of establishing a Digital Archive, with the procurement of a digital repository to manage and preserve digital records of historical value. Additional work is underway to develop a project plan and processes for the full-service implementation of a Digital Archive, including the assessment and transfer of data to the repository. When complete, the Digital Archive will complement the existing physical archives, operated by the RBCM.



Looking Forward:

A Message from the Chief Records Officer

This report outlines key information management activities for the 2023/24 fiscal year.

As we move forward, we will adapt our policies and practices to technological advancements and new ways of working. To address the increasing volume of information and the evolving technologies shaping its management, we are undertaking several significant initiatives.

Our plans include establishing a Digital Archive to complement our existing physical archives, which will transform how we preserve and access information. We are also streamlining our processes for developing information schedules and appraisals to improve efficiency and accessibility. Additionally, we are updating our policies to address the integration of modern information technologies to support best practices in digital information management.

These actions are critical to managing the growing volume of information and adapting to new technologies used in its creation and management.

I want to thank all public sector employees for their dedication to transparent and responsible information management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Charmaine Lowe', written in a cursive style.

Charmaine Lowe
Chief Records Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister
Corporate Information and Records Management Office
Ministry of Citizens' Services