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Report 2025-117

Report Title: Records and Information Management Policy and Records Retention By-law

Committee Name: Corporate Support

Committee Meeting Date: June 3, 2025

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Information Technology

Reviewed by: Kate Campbell
Director
Communications and Information Technology

Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: June 18, 2025

Strategic Plan Priorities: ☒ Innovate for Service Excellence
☐ Ignite Economic Opportunity
☐ Foster a Thriving Community
☐ Propel Sustainable Growth
☐ Champion a Vibrant Future

Recommendation

“That the Corporate Support Committee, having considered Report 2025-117 ‘Records and Information Management Policy and Records Retention By-law’, recommend that County Council approve the Records and Information Management Policy; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council enact a by-law at the June 18, 2025 County Council meeting to update Northumberland County’s Records Retention and to repeal By-law 27-12.”

Purpose

To obtain approval for the Records and Information Management (RIM) Policy and Records Retention By-law.

Background

Records and information are critical assets that support the County's corporate functions, service delivery, and decision-making. Access to accurate and well-organized information enables departments to operate efficiently, respond effectively to community needs, leverage data-based technologies, and demonstrate transparency. Proper records management also plays a key role in mitigating risk and ensuring the County meets its financial, legal, and regulatory obligations.

Section 254 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requires that municipalities retain and preserve the records of the municipality and its local boards in a secure and accessible manner. Section 255 permits municipalities and its local boards to destroy a record if a retention period for the record has been established in accordance with that section and the retention period has expired or the record is a copy of the original record.

The County's Records Retention By-law 27-12 established the current schedule for the retention of records in the custody and control of the County. Policies RM-01 'Records Management Program Policy' and RM-02 'Records Retention Program Policy' were approved by Council in 2012. The new Records Retention By-law will replace By-law 27-12, and the new Records and Information Management Policy will replace policies RM-01 and RM-02. These updates will modernize the County's approach to information governance.

Implementing a new Records and Information Management Policy and updating the Records Retention Schedule will allow the County to:

- Ensure legal and regulatory compliance;
- Enhance information governance and accountability;
- Improve operational efficiency;
- Mitigate risk;
- Adapt more easily to technological advancements, including AI adoption;
- Support strategic planning and data-driven decision-making; and
- Reduce costs.

Delegation of Authority to the County Clerk

In June 2017, Bill 68, *Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017*, removed the requirement for municipalities to gain the approval of the Municipal Auditor prior to any changes to the municipality's Records Retention By-law.

Several municipalities, including Clarington, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Barrie, Caledon, and the Town of Cobourg have also delegated authority to the Clerk to make amendments to their Records Retention Schedules.

By delegating authority to the Clerk, or their designate, the County can ensure that its Records Retention Schedule is updated immediately in response to legislative or operational changes.

The Retention Schedule ensures that records are retained according to legislative and operational requirements and disposed of accordingly. Ensuring that the Retention Schedule is

kept up to date reduces the risk and cost associated with retaining personal or confidential information longer than necessary.

As a best practice, a Retention Schedule should be reviewed annually to account for changes in legislation. By delegating the authority to the Clerk or their designate, the County will be able to update the Retention Schedule more frequently.

Consultations

The development of the Records and Information Management Policy and Records Retention By-law involved reviewing the County's current records management practices as well as the records-related policies and by-laws from other Ontario municipalities. The Ontario Municipal Records Management System (TOMRMS), a system used by municipalities across Ontario, informed the Retention Schedule updates. County departments were consulted on changes to the Retention Schedule. Communications, IT and Legislative Services were consulted on changes to the policy and by-law.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

N/A

Discussion / Options

N/A

Financial Impact

N/A

Member Municipality Impacts

TN/A

Conclusion / Outcomes

Staff recommend that County Council adopt the 'Records and Information Management Policy and Records Retention By-law'.

Attachments

- 1) Report 2025-117 ATTACH 1 'Records Retention By-law'
- 2) Report 2025-117 ATTACH 2 'Records and Information Management Policy'
- 3) Report 2025-117 ATTACH 3 'Records Retention Schedule'