

Email and Electronic Message Management Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure the efficient management of Town email and electronic messaging systems.
- 1.2 This policy is intended to help staff by defining clear roles, responsibilities, and processes to ensure consistent standards and practices are implemented for the life cycle management of records in the custody and control of the Town.
- 1.3 This policy ensures that, regardless of format or medium, emails and electronic messaging are managed consistently across the corporation from the time they are created, used, retained and disposed of or preserved.

2 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- 2.1 **“Record”** means a record as defined in the *Municipal Act, 2001* as amended from time to time.
- 2.2 **“Transitory”** means a record that is useful for only a short time and has minor importance by not being required to meet statutory obligations, set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction, commit the Town to an action, become a receipt or provide evidence of legal, financial, operations or other office requirements for the Town of Aurora. It may include copies of official records that are created for convenience and reference only and should be destroyed before the retention period of the original/official document. Transitory records can include personal emails, drafts, copies, general announcements, etc.
- 2.3 **“Repository”** - means a shared filing system where records are captured, organized, accessed, protected, retained, and destroyed in accordance with Town’s Record Retention By-law.

3 Policy Statement

The objective of this Policy is to:

- 3.1 Recognize that the Town’s email system is used for short-term communication by written message and is not considered a designated repository for the saving and managing of official records;
- 3.2 Recognize that emails and electronic messages may contain information which document a business transaction, activity or decision;

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- 3.3 Ensure that emails which are considered a corporate Record should be stored in the approved repository and categorized according to the content within the email according to the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Town’s Records and Information Management Policy;
- 3.4 Recognize that a repository accessible solely by an individual employee (i.e. email inbox) is not considered an appropriate or approved repository for corporate records;
- 3.5 Ensure that emails which are not transitory records, spam, or personal e-mail messages are saved and retained according to the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Town’s Records and Information Management Policy in the designated repositories.
- 3.6 Ensure the disposal of transitory email messages under the guidance and authority of this Policy, the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Records and Information Management Policy.

4 Application

- 4.1 This Policy applies to all Town of Fort Erie employees with a Town email address, including, with necessary modifications, the Mayor and Council.

5 Background

- 5.1 Electronic records are recorded information that is stored digitally. Like records in other media, these records are created or received during the course of business at the Town of Fort Erie and can provide evidence of the Town's business actions or decisions. Electronic records include email and attachments as well as electronic messages.
- 5.2 The Town of Fort Erie’s email and electronic messaging systems are designed for short-term communication and collaboration. It should not be used as a document storage or records management system. Email and electronic messages are subject to management under the Retention By-law in the same manner as any other Record/Official Record formats e.g. paper, electronic documents, microforms, etc.
- 5.3 Records document Town business activity and are necessary for retaining corporate memory and ensuring accountability and compliance with legal obligations. Records and information are Town property and their retention and disposal must be properly managed to increase efficiency and reduce risk.

6 Policy

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- 6.1 The use of the Town’s email system by its employees assumes and implies compliance with this Policy.
- 6.2 Every user of the Town’s email system(s) and accounts must practice appropriate and proper account use and etiquette (e.g., not contain aggressive or accusatory language, mean-spirited, abusive tones or slang) and must understand their responsibilities in this regard.
- 6.3 Authorized email an electronic message users should be aware that they have no reasonable expectation of privacy in emails transmitted, received or stored on and/or through the Town’s network. An email, whether created or received, is the property of the Town, and those stored on Town computers may be subject to retrieval and scrutiny by the Town without notice at any time.
- 6.4 The use and disclosure of email and electronic messages is covered by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56.
- 6.5 When an email message provides direct evidence of the Town’s mandated and/or business activities, it is considered a municipal record and must be stored in the approved physical or electronic corporate recordkeeping repository with related records.
- 6.6 If an email is considered transitory, the employees should ensure the disposal of transitory email message under the guidance and authority of this policy and the Town’s Records and Information Management Policy.

7 Email System Retention

- 7.1 The Town’s email system is used for short-term communication by written message and is not considered a designated repository for the saving and managing of official records.
- 7.2 The following retention rules apply to each authorized user’s mailbox:
 - 7.2.1 Emails are stored within the user’s mailbox for a total of total of two (2) years from the sent or received date of the email.
 - 7.2.2 Following the two (2) year period, e-mails will be archived by Digital Services staff in an external repository for a period of one (1) year.
 - 7.2.3 Deleted items are retained only for thirty (30) days.

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7.3 The following exceptions apply to section 7.2:

7.3.1 Emails of council members are retained from the date sent or received to the council member’s final day of office, plus four (4) years. For clarity purposes, if a member of council is re-elected, their emails will continue to be maintained until such time as their last day in office. Council members are not required to save their emails in a designated repository.

7.3.2 Requests may be provided in writing to the Manager of Digital Services for temporary relief from the mailbox rules outlined in section 7.1. which will be considered in consultation with the Town Clerk on a case-by-case basis. Requests must clearly outline the length of time required to address the outstanding emails and reason for requiring the request.

7.4 In the event an employee’s contract with the Town has ended, the department head shall be responsible for ensuring that emails within that employee’s mailbox which are considered a corporate record are stored in the approved corporate repository and categorized according to the content within the email according to the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Town’s Records and Information Management.

8 Electronic Message System Retention

8.1 The Town’s internal instant messaging system is intended to provide staff a convenient platform to enhance collaboration and short-term communication by written message and is not considered a designated repository for the saving and managing of official records.

8.2 The following retention rules apply to electronic messages stored on the Town’s internal electronic messaging service:

8.2.1 Electronic messages are stored within the user’s internal instant messaging system for a total of total of three (3) months from the sent or received date of the electronic message.

8.2.2 Deleted messages will not be stored or archived.

9 Classification of Email and Electronic Messages

9.1 An email or electronic message, and any associated content (including attachments), that provides proof of service, evidence of decisions and actions, or documents the output of a process, operation or other activity by the Town is considered a Record and must be properly filed and retained in accordance with the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Records and Information Management

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Policy.

- 9.2 For greater clarity Appendix A provides a quick reference guide for staff to assist in the decision making process when determining whether emails or electronic messages are transitory records.

10 Treatment of Records

- 10.1 Records must be organized, saved, maintained, retained and accessible within the approved physical or electronic repository appropriate to their use, sensitivity, and lifecycle rules associated to their document type.
- 10.2 Where the originator has created an email or electronic message for response from one or several recipients, the originator is responsible for saving the final email or electronic message and its threads.
- 10.3 The recipient of an email or electronic message received from an external source that is a Record, where the information does not exist elsewhere in the organization, is responsible for saving and filing the email or electronic message within the approved physical or electronic repository appropriate to their use, sensitivity, and lifecycle rules associated to their document type.
- 10.4 If an email is received from an external source that is considered a record and that email is addressed to multiple Town Officials, the first named recipient in the “TO:” line is responsible for saving and filing the email or electronic message; unless, another recipient is identified and confirmed to be the responsible Office of Accountability (business unit and/or department) for the records to be filed and saved within the record series.

11 Method of Storage and Retention

- 11.1 If an email or electronic message is deemed to be a Record then it must be retained in the manner specified in the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Records and Information Management Policy.
- 11.2 The preferred method to file email or electronic messages and their attachments is by saving the record using (.msg or .eml) format. The (.msg or .eml) format ensures both the message and any attachments are saved together in a single file format. Email can be stored in their native format and can be accessed, opened and re-used as an email or electronic message.

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- 11.3 Records should be filed according to the Town’s Naming Conventions Policy and the Town’s Record Retention By-law (e.g., naming of email or electronic messages (date [yyyy-mm-dd]) and title).
- 11.4 If an email is deemed to be a “Transitory Record”, it should be deleted or destroyed as soon as its use is complete.
- 11.5 Email or electronic message management tips are intended to support and optimize the time and efforts in keeping email or electronic messages organized, professional and under control.

12 Compliance

- 12.1 Management of email or electronic messages must comply with the following:
 - 12.1.1 Evidence Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.23
 - 12.1.2 Electronic records as documentary evidence CAN/CGSB-72.34-2017
 - 12.1.3 Copyright Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-42)
- 12.2 All digitization activities must comply with the following Town policies and procedures:
 - 12.2.1 XXX-### Records and Information Management Policy
 - 12.2.2 IT-002 Scanning Records Policy
 - 12.2.3 XX-### Naming Conventions Policy

13 Roles and Responsibilities

13.1 Manager, Digital Services:

- 13.1.1 Support this policy by configuring the corporate email and electronic messaging system to permanently delete messages of employees in accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of the policy, and respond to any requests to extend implementation of the rule; and

13.2 Records Management Assistant:

- 13.2.1 Communicate this Policy and guidelines to departments; and
- 13.2.2 Ensure departments are supported in interpreting and administering this policy and associated standards and guidelines.

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13.2.3 Provide training and advice on determining whether email messages are transitory or non-transitory and how to properly classify and file email messages to the Town’s information management system;

13.2.4 Support the implementation of this Policy

13.2.5 Maintain an up-to-date list of the positions whose emails will be extended and record the rationale for the extended timeframe.

13.3 Departmental managers/supervisors will:

13.3.1 Ensure employees follow approved records management policies, procedures and guidelines for email messages; and

13.3.2 Adhere to the Town Offboarding Procedures for employees that are changing positions or leaving the Town; and

13.3.3 In the event an employee’s contract with the Town has ended, the department head shall be responsible for ensuring that emails within that employee’s mailbox which are considered a corporate record are stored in the approved corporate repository and categorized according to the content within the email according to the Town’s Records Retention By-law and Town’s Records and Information Management.

13.4 Employees will:

13.4.1 Distinguish between non-transitory email records (and attachments) and transitory email records (those that contain no value);

13.4.2 Transfer email messages (and attachments) deemed non-transitory to the appropriate corporate records repository to be maintained with related records;

13.4.3 Delete/dispose of transitory email messages (and attachments) as soon as possible; and

13.4.4 Adhere to the Town Offboarding Procedures when changing positions or leaving the Town.

13.5 Clerk/Deputy Clerk will:

13.5.1 Oversee email use within across the Town and ensure adherence to all related legislation, policies and guidelines.

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