



The Recordkeeping Regime: Overcoming Recordkeeping Challenges in the Public Service

What is Recordkeeping?

Recordkeeping is about establishing ways and means for organizations to effectively capitalize on corporate information as a key business asset and enabler in support of decision-making, and to document business activity to satisfy stewardship, accountability and legal requirements. Under the *Library and Archives of Canada Act*, Parliament has assigned the Librarian and Archivist the responsibility of providing advice and guidance to departments and agencies on the management of records and the authority to control the disposition of records within government institutions.

Why is it Important?

Effective recordkeeping establishes core-essential administrative and business coherence within government for decision-making, the development of policy, and the delivery of programs and services to Canadians. Fundamentally, it also rests at the very core of ministerial and managerial accountability within Canada's democratic process. It provides ministers and deputies with the capacity to render an account of decisions and actions through the presentation of evidence in the form of records and documentation, and affords citizens through Parliament and its officers or committees the documentary means to assess organizational results or measure performance, to understand decision-making, or to evaluate the soundness and propriety of policy and actions. In short, to quote a seminal Canadian observation on the rudiments of modern public sector accountability, "records must be created, maintained and preserved in such a way that a contemporary democratic government can be held fully accountable to the public for its activities" (J. Grant Glassco, *Report of the Royal Commission on Government Organization*, 1962).

What are the Current Challenges?

The Librarian and Archivist of Canada recognized the need to raise the collective challenges of recordkeeping across government to the executive level following the Auditor General's Report of 2003 which identified shortcomings in government's records disposition program. Information Management Capacity Checks self-administered within a number of departments and agencies also revealed significant organizational gaps and shortfalls in recordkeeping capacity and infrastructure. Compounded by the particular public administration challenges associated with governance in the digital era, and computer-based communications technology, these issues were of sufficient profile and importance to attract the attention of the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Secretary of the Treasury Board, who supported the Librarian and Archivist in the creation of a series of Deputy Minister Roundtables on Information Management and Recordkeeping in the Fall of 2006. In effect, one of the key challenges for government is the development of organizational capacity to administer programs and services effectively within the current and ongoing *information revolution*, "which has dramatically enhanced public expectations for speedy decisions, for immediate responses from government, for transparency in government operations, and for public engagement in decision-making" (Kevin G. Lynch, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, *Fourteenth Annual Report to the Prime Minister on the Public Service of Canada*, 31 March 2007).

What are Deputy Ministers Doing About It?

The Roundtables were co-chaired by Ian E. Wilson, Librarian and Archivist of Canada, and Ken Cochrane, government's Chief Information Officer. Deputy Ministers agreed that the Government of Canada needed to address recordkeeping issues "head on" and asked LAC, in collaboration with departments and agencies reporting through TBPAC, to lead the development of a program of change that would support government executives in their efforts to enable an effective national public administration partly by returning recordkeeping to the status of a core public service value.

Deputies also agreed that an ADM Taskforce on Recordkeeping provide insight and guidance for recommendations that would emerge from a number Recordkeeping Working Groups composed of managers from LAC and departments and agencies studying related issues over a period of 6 months. These recommendations were presented to TBPAC with the proposal that TBPAC endorse the design of the overall recordkeeping program of change.

What are the Desired Outcomes?

The primary outcomes include the following:

- Deputy Ministers and Deputy Heads are supported by a Recordkeeping Regime that enables effective national public administration.
- Recordkeeping is sustainable over time, and therefore;
- The Government of Canada is more responsive and more accountable to Canadians because proper recordkeeping is part of its culture and is a core value and competency of public servants.
- Canada is a recognized leader in the development and national implementation of international standards for recordkeeping.

To achieve these desired outcomes, the following intermediate outcomes need to occur:

- The Government of Canada begins a horizontal program of change to establish recordkeeping as a core value and competency of all public servants;
- A Recordkeeping Directive and a corresponding Recordkeeping Delegation Authority Instrument are developed for government under the umbrella of TBS Information Management Policy.
- The benefits of recordkeeping are communicated across the Government of Canada and business requirements are established;
- Funding is available to support Departments in their implementation of Recordkeeping;
- Departments are equipped with standards, tools, infrastructure and capacity to support the management and disposition of paper and electronic records;
- The Management Accountability Framework (MAF) reflects the importance of recordkeeping in relation to compliance and business value; and,
- The Government of Canada has the infrastructure in place to address the issue of legacy records.

These outcomes, activities, the associated deliverables and stakeholders are depicted to 2012 in the graphic at the end of this document.

What is the Government of Canada Doing About It?

To achieve a state of recordkeeping within government that provides for accountability and establishes business value, the Working Groups articulated a number of critical requirements, beginning with the development and elaboration of a Recordkeeping Regime to act both as the primary foundational component and to subsequently establish the organizational basis for the program of change itself. As it is being conceptually proposed and practically designed, Recordkeeping represents an administrative paradigm shift that requires broad-based cultural change and new ways of approaching records at multiple levels, from policy and infrastructure to capacity and tools. The design and implementation of the changes have already begun through LAC's Government Records Branch (GRB) team with the collaboration of departments and agencies, although it is recognized that years of effort will be required to fully achieve the desired outcomes. The sustainability of the recordkeeping initiative will require executive leadership, linkage to the priorities of government, funding, capacity development, planning, and the dedicated efforts of LAC and other managers and staff from departments across government.

The Recordkeeping Regime

Fundamentally, the Regime is based on the development of documentation standards for recordkeeping within institutions linked to program activities, business lines, and assigned roles and responsibilities. The standards will be developed internally by departments and agencies to guide their decision-making related to the creation and management of records, and to establish delegated authorities for the disposition of records as required by Parliament. The Regime is also based on several key strategies, including the management of records having ongoing business value at the point of their creation (versus the previous business model which typically managed records at the point of their destruction). This substantial shift in strategic approach will enable departments and agencies to focus resources on the management of key business records in a differentiated manner rather than attempting to manage and maintain accessibility to all records regardless of their value to government or the public interest, which is becoming increasingly costly with the growing number of electronic records.

The development of a Recordkeeping Regime is supported by government's new IM Policy¹, and it will be the subject of a specific Recordkeeping Directive². The intention is to elevate accountability for recordkeeping within institutions to the level of Deputy Minister or Deputy Head, and to support deputies through non-prescriptive tools enabling them to delegate authority for recordkeeping throughout their organizations commensurate with the unique nature of their own business.

Recommended Way Forward

LAC's GRB will continue to lead the management of the initiative under an umbrella Project Charter, leveraging the resources, best practices, expertise and successes of departments, agencies, private and public sectors internationally. Critical to the success of recordkeeping changes will be the involvement of related GC recordkeeping organizations and governing bodies, particularly during the design phase including: Treasury Board Secretariat, Office of the Comptroller General, Privy Council Office, Organizational Readiness Office, Departmental Information Management Enablement Services, the Canada School of Public Service, Library and Archives Canada, the GC IM Community and the Committee of Information Management in Business.

The recommended approach to design is also based on the development of discrete projects using an Advisory Team of early adopter departments and agencies to address priority recordkeeping challenges. It is intended that this initial set of projects be clustered according to departmental capacity and maturity, and that they be conducted in parallel to inform the Recordkeeping Regime and its supporting standards, infrastructure, tools and required human resource capacity and competencies.

The design approach is in line with the request of the ADM Taskforce to provide immediate short-term successes to establish momentum towards the desired business and recordkeeping end-states. It will be informed by best practices of horizontal initiatives, and by previous government experience within other large change initiatives including Modern Comptrollership, PSMA, and GOL. Broad-based communications at multiple levels will also begin from the inception of design, including the development of a communication strategy to inform stakeholders of the new recordkeeping agenda and its components.

¹ The new IM Policy is in effect since July 2007.

² It is expected that the Recordkeeping Directive will be in effect in March 2008.

The Recordkeeping Regime

Roadmap of Outcomes and Activities

2005 - 2012

Desired Outcomes

- Deputy Ministers and Deputy Heads are supported by a Recordkeeping Regime that enables effective national public administration.
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- Recordkeeping is sustainable over time
- Canada is a recognized leader in the development and national implementation of international standards for recordkeeping

