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POINT OF VIEW

Canadian municipalities are exploring AI. Can they trust the answers?

AI can accelerate service delivery, but only when municipalities can trust the records, data, and content behind the answers.



Municipal government challenge

Municipal governments have long recognized the importance of information. Every permit, property record, planning document, tax record, inspection report, and council decision contributes to the delivery of services residents rely on every day. Over time, these records have accumulated across a range of business applications, repositories, and archives, reflecting decades of growth, regulatory requirements, service improvements, and technology investments.

AI is bringing renewed attention to the information that local governments have been managing for years. Information that was once accessed by a relatively small group of employees within a department can now be searched, summarized, and connected in new ways.

Records that are easy to find, well managed, and supported by clear governance provide a stronger foundation for these new technologies. Information held in older applications, departmental repositories, or disconnected systems remains valuable but may require additional attention as local governments consider how AI fits into future operations.

Information readiness for the AI era

Municipal governments already possess the information needed to support many AI initiatives. Records that were once retained primarily for operational or regulatory purposes can now help public servants access knowledge, answer questions, and support decisions more effectively. The challenge is making that information accessible, trustworthy, and governed across the organization.

As municipalities evaluate AI opportunities, attention is shifting toward information readiness. Questions about data quality, records management, retention, privacy, and access are becoming just as important as the AI tools themselves.

Organizations that invest in information governance, content management, and digital records programs are better positioned to move from AI experimentation to practical implementation.



Why information readiness matters now

Ontario municipalities are preparing for new privacy requirements under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2027. Bill 194 also establishes a framework for future cybersecurity and AI requirements across parts of the public sector, including municipal institutions covered by MFIPPA.[1]



Decommissioning systems, preserving information

Many local governments continue to operate applications that are no longer strategic because the information inside them still has value. In some cases, the application has effectively become an archive.

Application decommissioning allows local governments to retain the information without retaining the application. Records remain available for operational, regulatory, and historical purposes while reducing the cost and effort associated with maintaining aging systems. It also makes information easier to bring forward as organizations modernize their technology environment.

Together, these developments place greater emphasis on understanding what information municipalities hold, where it resides, who can access it, how long it must be retained, and how it can be used responsibly.

Better outcomes for public servants and residents

For public servants

When public servants can quickly access trusted information, they spend less time searching, validating, and reconciling records across systems. They can make decisions with greater confidence, work more efficiently, and easily draw on knowledge, regardless of where it originated.

Many public sector employees are understandably asking what AI means for their jobs. While AI is likely to change how some tasks are performed, it also has the potential to reduce repetitive work and create more capacity for strategic, high-value activities. As municipalities adapt, employees will need clarity on which tasks are best handled by people and which can be supported by AI. In that environment, trustworthy answers are not optional. They are foundational to confidence, adoption, and responsible use.

For residents

Residents experience the outcome. Their questions are answered faster, services are delivered more consistently, and their personal information is handled securely. The resident experience often depends on the quality and accessibility of the information behind the process.

How OpenText helps

OpenText helps local governments preserve, govern, protect, and access information throughout its lifecycle. Through information governance, records management, application decommissioning, information archiving, privacy, and cybersecurity capabilities, local governments can reduce complexity, improve access to information, and support the responsible adoption of AI and other emerging technologies.

1 Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC), *Updates on obligations for provincial and municipal institutions; Planning for Success: Privacy Impact Assessment Guide for Ontario's public institutions*



Next steps

AI readiness starts with information readiness.

Many local governments already hold the information AI will depend on. The next practical step is to understand where that information resides, how it is governed, and which applications are being maintained mainly to preserve records.

This gives local governments a clearer view of where they can reduce complexity, improve access, support privacy obligations, and prepare for future AI initiatives. It helps public servants find and trust the information they need, while making it easier to manage and govern over time.

Schedule a conversation

Why OpenText?

AI, modernization, privacy, cybersecurity, and application decommissioning all depend on information.

OpenText brings decades of expertise to unlock data, connect people and processes, and fuel trusted AI, transforming information into outcomes and helping redefine the future of work. We help local governments make better use of the information they already hold, whether it resides in active systems, archives, or legacy applications.

Headquartered in Waterloo, Ontario, OpenText has worked alongside Canadian public sector organizations for decades, helping them manage information throughout its lifecycle while supporting modernization, privacy, cybersecurity, and AI initiatives.

Customer Stories

1. The City of Calgary:
   https://www.opentext.com/ca/customers/the-city-of-calgary
2. Metro Vancouver:
   https://www.opentext.com/ca/customers/metro-vancouver
3. Red Deer County:
   https://www.opentext.com/ca/customers/red-deer-county

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