

City of Fort Saskatchewan Speeds Reporting Tasks and Simplifies Audits



CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Operating Budget:
\$45 million

Solutions:
Caseware Working Papers
Canadian Financials

The City of Fort Saskatchewan is located 15 minutes northeast of Edmonton, Alberta and is home to 18,653 people who appreciate the natural beauty and wealth of both indoor and outdoor activities.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan provides residents with a multitude of services and programs and receives its \$45 million annual operating budget from various sources including property taxes, provincial and federal grants, and user fees. The City's financial team is charged with many tasks including preparing year-end processes, working papers and financial statements, and is assisted in its tasks by Caseware Working Papers, and Caseware Canadian GAAP Financials.

A Time-Consuming Process

Until recently, the City's staff relied primarily on spreadsheets to assemble the annual financial statements. "We experienced numerous delays preparing the financials," recalls Mirjam Brett, Finance Director for the City of Fort Saskatchewan. "There were always manual edits and adjustments as we worked to ensure there were no errors. It was an extensive and time-consuming process."

A Favorite Among Accounting Firms

The City's finance team sought to shorten and simplify the entire year-end process. They spoke to colleagues at other municipalities to gain insight from their experiences. "We learned that other municipalities are using Caseware," says Holly Omelchuk, Senior Accountant for the City. "And we know Caseware is used by many accounting firms, including our auditors."

Based on the positive feedback received from colleagues and the product's reputation, the City moved ahead with the implementation of Caseware. "We installed the software ourselves but quickly learned that we needed expert advice on setup, and needed training to ensure we used the product correctly and to its fullest potential," says Mirjam.

Expert Advice Enhances Value

At a Government Finance Office Association (GFOA) conference, Mirjam met F.H. Black & Company, Caseware authorized trainers and consultants. "We were impressed and asked them to come in and help us," says Mirjam.

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CHALLENGE

Annual financial statement generation at the City of Fort Saskatchewan was a time-consuming and burdensome manual process involving much overtime and weekend work.

SOLUTION

The City implemented Caseware Working Papers, GAAP Financials, and Connector with the assistance of F.H. Black & Company, a Caseware authorized consultant.

RESULTS

Overtime and weekend labor eliminated. Significant labor savings. Audit preparation faster and easier.



City of Fort Saskatchewan

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Mirjam Brett
Financial Director
City of Fort Saskatchewan

"The experience F.H. Black & Company consultants have in setting up and using Caseware is invaluable to us," notes Mirjam. "The bonus for us was their knowledge and understanding of the internal processes municipalities experience during year-end preparations and the audit. This meant that we didn't need to spend time explaining how we operate."

Using the import functionality that is built in to Caseware Working Papers, the City imported its general ledger data and mapped its accounts, recreating the prior year's financial statements as a test. "It worked! F.H. Black provided the training and support to correctly group the accounts, set up the consolidated structure and worked through our year-end process with us," notes Holly.

"Now, our financial statement generation is almost completely automated. We import the data from our accounting software and make all the adjustments in Caseware," says Mirjam. "It is much faster to work in Caseware, easier to troubleshoot and create any on-the-fly reports we need."

All supporting information is scanned and electronically attached to the Caseware files, eliminating the need for thick file folders of supporting data.

Financial Reporting

"We feel like we have only skimmed the surface of the power of Caseware. We plan to utilize it more this year to create monthly financials and quarterly reports. We are looking into using it to help monitor the costs associated with our infrastructure projects."

In addition to using Caseware to create its annual PSAB-compliant financial statement, the City also is using the software to prepare its annual Financial Information Return (FIR).

An unexpected benefit of the Caseware solution is its role in helping to train junior accounting staff

members. "They are able to immediately see the effect a journal entry has on the financial statement," explains Holly. "It helps them understand the logic and relevance of their work."

Cost Savings

Mirjam says that Caseware is saving the City a tremendous amount of time. "Annual report generation used to involve lots of overtime and lots of weekends at the office," she says. "Since we started using Caseware, we have reduced overtime."

Holly adds, "It is almost push-button easy. Caseware is definitely paying for itself."

Now preparing for annual audits is much simpler for the City, and it is anticipated that audit costs will come down in the subsequent years. "Because our auditors also use Caseware, we can simply hand them a memory stick with our data rather than the stacks of paper files we used to," explains Mirjam.

Recently, Mirjam attended the Western Canada GFOA Conference, and was invited to speak about the City's experience with Caseware at the conference. "I was happy to do so. We are very pleased with Caseware and the efficiencies it brings us," concludes Mirjam.



For more than 25 years, F.H. Black & Company Incorporated has worked with finance and budget departments in government, education and corporations across North America to crush waste, & eliminate inefficiency.

Our mission is to ensure that our finance & budget departments do more with less, do it better than it was done before and do it in less time.

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