

The City of Lacombe Saves \$45,000 on Audit Services



Operating & Capital Budget:
\$40 million

Solutions:
CaseWare Working Papers
Canadian Financials



Nestled in one of Central Alberta’s most fertile valleys between Calgary and Edmonton lies Lacombe, a historically rich and picturesque city of 12,000. The City of Lacombe is responsible for providing residents with essential services, utilities, and amenities including fire and rescue, water and sewer, transit, and recreational resources.

The City of Lacombe implemented CaseWare Working Papers and Canadian Financials as part of an effort to improve and modernize the production of its annual financial statements. Not only has CaseWare delivered on those expectations, it is delivering time and financial savings well beyond the City’s expectations.

Saving \$45,000 in Fees

“We implemented CaseWare in 2013 and used it that first year to produce the City’s financial statements, plus the statements for five of our entities. It was a complete success,” recalls Theresa Musser, Financial Services Manager for the City of Lacombe. “Shortly after we

implemented CaseWare, we were able to renegotiate our audit services contract with our accountancy firm—for a savings of \$45,000.”

From Months to Weeks

Like many municipalities, the City of Lacombe had been producing its annual financial statements using Excel and Word. There were literally dozens of complex and interlinked spreadsheets involved in the process that typically took four months to complete.

“It was very time consuming,” Musser recalls. “With six separate entities to report on, we sometimes needed to request an extension in order to complete the filings.”

Using CaseWare, the City shaved that four-month cycle down to just two weeks. “It’s so much more streamlined and straight forward now,” Musser notes. “And we’ve dramatically cut down on the paper used, since all of our data and supporting documents are now stored electronically in the CaseWare files.”

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CHALLENGE

The City of Lacombe had long relied on a series of spreadsheets and text documents to produce its annual reports. The process was time consuming, complex, and potentially error prone.

SOLUTION

F.H. Black & Company implemented CaseWare Working Papers and Canadian Financials and set up templates to speed the production of annual and quarterly reporting.

RESULTS

The City was able to renegotiate its audit contract for a savings of \$45,000. Statement generation time was cut from four months to two weeks. Audits are faster and there is greater confidence in the numbers.

City of Lacombe

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Theresa Musser
Financial Services Manager
City of Lacombe

Without the need to print and route paper files throughout the office and to and from auditors, the entire process is more visible, trackable, and accountable.

Streamline Audit Cycle

The City's audit firm also uses CaseWare, which further speeds and simplifies the statement production process. "The auditors have easier access to our data now; they can quickly find the files they need to review, and can follow a clear audit trail to where our numbers are coming from," Musser says. "Before CaseWare, our auditors were typically on site for ten days. Now they only need three days on site. We are realizing an overall annual savings of 25 percent. This is a huge benefit to Lacombe."

Now, rather than providing numbers and supporting data to the audit firm for compilation of the financial statements, the City is generating its own financial statements using CaseWare. "This is important," says Musser. "It makes for a pure audit, where the accountants are auditing our work, not their own efforts."

Partner Adds Value

The City of Lacombe engaged F.H. Black & Company Incorporated, a CaseWare Certified Consultant, to implement CaseWare. "F.H. Black is just fantastic at what they do. They thoroughly understand the software and the nuances of municipal accounting," says Musser. "They set up our templates, provided us with great training, and help us understand additional ways we can leverage CaseWare."

Leverage the Tool

One of the additional ways the City of Lacombe is leveraging CaseWare is by using it to produce its

Financial Informational Return (FIR) and quarterly financial reporting. "F.H. Black prepared the templates for us and now producing these reports is very straightforward and efficient," says Musser. "We had never even attempted quarterly reporting before because we saw it as too labour intensive."

Improve Confidence in the Numbers

In addition to the substantial cost and time-savings attributed to CaseWare, the City also has improved overall confidence in its financial statements. "When you're relying on spreadsheets, you must constantly double and triple check formulas and formatting for accuracy," notes Musser. "There was always a concern that as we copied worksheets, something would get dropped or broken. With CaseWare, we have no such concerns."

We Love It

CaseWare has literally transformed financial statement generation for the City of Lacombe. Musser concludes, "Our auditors love it. Our Council loves it. Our Commissioners love it. And we love it!"



For 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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