

The City of Lethbridge Saves Time and Money With Working Papers and GAAP Financials



CITY OF
Lethbridge

Operating Budget:
\$63 million+

Solutions:
CaseWare Working Papers
GAAP Financials
Connector
AFIR Tool



Lethbridge, located in southern Alberta, is a commercial, financial, transportation, and industrial centre with a population of 89,000. The City of Lethbridge provides both essential and nonessential services to its residents, from fire and emergency response to museum and library operations. The City's Financial Services department is staffed by a team of professionals charged with bringing efficiency, accuracy, and transparency to the organization. CaseWare Working Papers and GAAP Financials are the tools the department relies on to fulfill that goal.

More and More Spreadsheets

As the PSAB (Public Sector Accounting Board) requirements changed, organizations like the City of Lethbridge were forced to change the presentation of their financial statements. Many turned to spreadsheets to accommodate the changes.

Municipal governments within the province of Alberta are required to file a Municipal Financial Information Return (MFIR), which must be submitted to the Municipal Affairs office along

with audited financial statements by May 1st of each year.

At the City of Lethbridge, preparing the MFIR involved a multitude of spreadsheets and the dedicated work of one of the City's most tenured employees.

The City of Lethbridge has been using CaseWare Working Papers for many years, although in a limited capacity.

"We were just using CaseWare for our balance sheet items," recalls Tricia Fraser, Financial Reporting Supervisor for the City. "Essentially it was serving as a document holder only. We created our financial statements and other financial reports in Excel. We needed a better way, as it was just too manual and time consuming."

Embracing Efficiency

The City engaged F.H. Black & Company, a CaseWare certified consultant, to help it gain efficiency and reduce manual data entry tasks. "F.H. Black has been a tremendous resource,"

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CHALLENGE

The City of Lethbridge was increasingly relying on spreadsheets to produce its financial statements, which proved time consuming and inefficient.

SOLUTION

The City engaged F.H. Black & Company to implement CaseWare Working Papers, GAAP Financials, Connector, and AFIR Tool streamlining its financial reporting tasks.

RESULTS

MFIR is completed three weeks earlier than before. Annual financial report completed in record time. Accuracy and security are improved. Audit fees are expected to decline.



City of Lethbridge

"CaseWare buys us strategic planning time, time where we can consider what didn't work, what worked well, and what we can do better. That's priceless."

Tricia Fraser, CPA, CA
Financial Reporting Supervisor
City of Lethbridge

says Fraser. "Their knowledge and experience with CaseWare has helped us make more strategic use of the product."

Financial Statements Completed in Record Time

Using CaseWare GAAP Financials, the City's annual financial statement is completed substantially faster than before. "In fact, I had staff asking me what we had forgotten because they were so surprised that we were done so quickly."

That time savings is being put to productive use, Fraser says. "We used to spend so much time preparing documents and assembling the report, that we had little time to analyze the data and look for improvements. CaseWare buys us strategic planning time, time where we can consider what didn't work, what worked well, and what we can do better. That's priceless."

Three Weeks Saved in Production of MFIR

F.H. Black showed the City how to use CaseWare Working Papers and CaseWare Connector to populate the MFIR report directly.

"As a test, we prepared last year's MFIR both ways, the old way and using CaseWare for the portions we automated," says Fraser. "Both ways produced the exact same result, only CaseWare did it instantly. Now, instead of handing our auditors a series of spreadsheets and a binder of supporting documentation, we will hand them a CaseWare file."

Fraser says this single change will likely result in lower audit fees, and enables the City to complete its MFIR three weeks sooner than in the past.

Improved Accuracy and Security

Another benefit the City is realizing through CaseWare is increased accuracy. In the past, personnel would be assigned to troubleshoot and validate the Excel

spreadsheets. "Now, when something is out of balance, we can easily follow the trail to the source and make the corrections," says Fraser. "And because there is no manual input, the opportunity for errors is greatly reduced."

The move to CaseWare GAAP Financials has led to improved data security. "I used to be scared to give anyone else access to the spreadsheets, fearing someone would change something and I wouldn't know who did it or why," Fraser explains. "In CaseWare, I'm able to set up security so that I can control who has access to what. Now, we have 20 people working in CaseWare, and the data is accessible, auditable, and secure."

Leverage the Investment

The City is leveraging its use of CaseWare by using it to produce other financial reports, including sections of its unaudited financial statement that is sent to council prior to the publication of the audited report. "This report is due during our busiest time of the year," notes Fraser. "We were able to put it into CaseWare and the time savings is unbelievable. Frustration levels of staff during this crunch time are dramatically reduced."



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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