TOPIC: DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATION-WIDE RECORDS SCHEDULING PLAN

1. **Introduction**

The purpose of this circular is to explain to Senior Records Officers the requirements for the development of an organization-wide records scheduling plan. A plan is required for every organization that the *Records Management Regulation* applies to. For Senior Records Officers who represent a department as well as boards and agencies, the plan may be done for each organization or may be combined.

The organization-wide records scheduling plan is a working document that outlines the scope, priority and timeframes of projects to schedule each organization’s records according to the new records scheduling methodology.

On January 25, 1995, the Public Records Committee (PRC), the forerunner of the Alberta Records Management Committee (ARMC), approved an implementation strategy for the new records management program in the Government of Alberta, including the new records retention and disposition scheduling methodology.

Part of this was the requirement for each government organization to develop an organization-wide records scheduling plan by October 1, 1995. Due to the length of time required to finalize Senior Records Officer appointments, this deadline has been extended to December 15, 1995. An additional decision by the Committee was that all records in the Government of Alberta must be scheduled by April 1, 2000. Plans should be developed with this time frame in mind.

2. **Records Management Planning**

The Committee recognizes that organization-wide records scheduling planning should not be undertaken in isolation. It should be part of a broader records management plan for an organization and indeed incorporated into the business planning process for the organizations. It should also be linked with plans for the implementation of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. .../2
In general terms, a comprehensive records management plan should address the development and implementation of a records management program and records management systems for an entire organization. The key aspects of this are:

- records management policies, standards and guidelines;
- the organizational records structure (including classification and retrieval systems and records retention and disposition schedules); and
- the acquisition and implementation of technology to enable effective records management.

As a minimum, however, to enable the Committee to evaluate records management programs, a scheduling plan is all that is required to be submitted.

3. **Elements of the Organization-Wide Records Scheduling Plan**

The records scheduling plan should consist of:

- summary information about the organization (eg. mandate, purpose, mission, organizational structure, programs and services, legislation, etc.); and
- a list of planned scheduling projects in order of priority, the organizational unit(s) involved, existing schedules and target start and completion dates.

There is not a mandatory format for the organization-wide records scheduling plan. A possible format is illustrated in Chapter 2-2 of *Records Scheduling and Disposition in the Government of Alberta*. Senior Records Officers may customize the format and add any additional information they feel is necessary to meet the needs of their organization and to keep the Alberta Records Management Committee, Information Management and Privacy Branch and the Provincial Archives of Alberta informed of their planned records scheduling activities or records management activities if they opt to do more comprehensive plans.

4. **Factors Affecting the Organization-Wide Records Scheduling Plans**

Different factors will affect how each organization goes about planning and implementing its records scheduling plans. These include:

- whether the records management program and systems are centrally controlled by the Senior Records Officer or whether control is decentralized to program areas with the SRO playing a facilitative role;
• whether specialized records management resources are available (either through existing staff or contracted) to plan, coordinate and undertake scheduling projects or whether program area staff (or contracted resources) will undertake the projects, with the SRO doing the planning and coordination;

• whether records schedules will be developed separately from classification and retrieval systems or whether both will be developed concurrently as part of an integrated organizational records structure; and

• the size of the organization, its structure and the number of regional, district and field offices it has; and

• the importance, public profile and complexity of the business functions of the organization, including the significance of changes being made to the programs and service delivery mechanisms.

Senior Records Officers will have to assess these factors before developing the organization-wide records scheduling plan. Each organization is unique and each records management program and scheduling plan will therefore be unique. The Alberta Records Management Committee does not recommend or require one standard approach for all government organizations.

5. Determining the Scope of Scheduling Projects

The Committee advocates developing comprehensive schedules for each program or service in an organization. It discourages scheduling by organizational unit because organizational structures are so subject to change. For most government organizations, scheduling by program or service will be the most logical way to achieve the principle of comprehensive schedules. Identifying programs and services will require research and consultation with organizational staff.

Each organization may choose to undertake its scheduling projects in a different way. Senior Records Officers should remember that the key principle is to develop comprehensive schedules. It would be perfectly acceptable for example for a small agency with 2 or 3 programs or core business functions to develop one schedule for all of their operational records. Similarly, if an organization is developing an integrated organization-wide operational records structure, they may choose to submit one schedule that covers all operational records in the organization. On the other hand, large departments with many programs may have as many as 50 schedules. Whatever approach makes the most sense to the organization and that fits within the principle of comprehensiveness is the one that should be followed. For assistance with determining the scope of scheduling projects, contact the Information Management and Privacy Branch.
6. Establishing Priorities for Scheduling Projects
Chapter 2-2 of Records Scheduling and Disposition in the Government of Alberta provides guidelines to assist in determining and establishing priorities for scheduling projects. Priorities are most important if centralized resources are conducting the scheduling projects. If decentralized resources are conducting the projects this would not be as important, unless there were high priority areas that from an organization-wide perspective should be scheduled before others.

There is another factor that should be considered when determining priority projects that is not covered in the publication. This concerns programs and services where there is a business process flow. An example would be road construction in Transportation and Utilities. The first step in the process is land surveys. The second is roadway design. Next would be roadway construction. The final step would be road maintenance. If separate schedules are being developed for each of these areas, it may make sense to schedule them in the order of the business process flow.

7. Getting the Organization-Wide Records Scheduling Plan Approved
Once the scheduling plan has been completed, it should get executive approval, preferably by the Deputy Head, since the Records Management Regulation makes the Deputy Head accountable for records management.

8. Submitting the Organization-Wide Records Scheduling Plan to the ARMC
When the plan is completed and approved, it should be submitted to Sue Kessler, Secretary, Alberta Records Management Committee. The Alberta Records Management Committee will review each scheduling plan. The Information Management and Privacy Branch will use the plans to evaluate scheduling activities in government organizations on behalf of the ARMC. The plans will also be used by IMPB and the Provincial Archives to plan the involvement of their resources in the various scheduling projects.

9. Conclusion
This circular provides an overview and clarification of the organization-wide records scheduling plan development process. Further details can be found in Chapter 2-2 of the Records Scheduling and Development in the Government of Alberta publication. The RT-A1 (Designing an Organizational Records Structure) and the RT-A3 (Developing a Records Schedule) courses offered by the Information Management and Privacy Branch deal with these issues in detail. For further assistance with records scheduling planning, contact the Information Management and Privacy Branch.

Original Signed by June 28, 1995

Stan Petrica, Chair Date