



Meeting Management Drives Better Transparency

While Saving Weeks of Time for the City of Burlington

The trend to smarter, automated and more transparent government is driving change at the City of Burlington. New technologies are being introduced to lower costs, improve efficiencies and enable citizens to get fast access to information. Recently Burlington decided to deploy eSCRIBE on Microsoft Azure. With eSCRIBE, public servants and elected officials have been able to eliminate paper and automate the hours of manual processes spent copying, collating and distributing binders of minutes, agenda items, tasks and reports. Everything is now online, accessible and secure in Microsoft's Canadian cloud data centres. The complexity of managing the information and tasks generated by multiple meetings, agendas, committees, sub-committees and citizen input is instantly, easily and securely available.

“ Before eSCRIBE, everything was done manually. It is almost impossible to try and quantify the hours we spent preparing. Compiling reports took months, and building a meeting agenda was a two-day process for each committee. Now everything we need is up-to-date and securely available on any device, anywhere. ”

Danielle Pitoscia,
Manager of Election &
Committee Services



City of Burlington – Committed to Sustainable Growth

In the lobby of City Hall in Burlington, Ontario, an inscription reads “Where people, nature and business thrive”. Repeatedly voted as one of the best places to live in Canada, the City of Burlington is committed to innovation, sustainable growth, and to building trust with its most valued assets – its constituents.



Good Government = Great Citizen Value

In order to provide forward-thinking governance to its citizens, the city relies on four standing committees that gather information from public delegations and submit recommendations to Council on matters pertaining to Finance, Planning & Building, Transportation and Roads, Parks & Recreation, IT Services, Human Resources, Citizen Advisory Committees, and much more. Some 100 reports are produced annually, all of them essential to informed decision-making, accountability and transparency – in other words, good government.



Meetings, Management & Paperwork

Not surprisingly, meetings are the order of the day at City Hall. However, the complexity of scheduling meetings and preparing agendas for members of multiple committees, sub-committees, departments and Council itself is overwhelming if left to paper and manual processes.

Danielle Manton, Manager of Election & Committee Services, remembers what it was like before eSCRIBE: “Everything was done manually. It is almost impossible to try and quantify the hours we spent preparing. Compiling reports took months, and building a meeting agenda was a two-day process for each committee.”

Mired in inefficiencies and, the City realized they needed to replace their paper-based, manual processes with an automated meeting management system. In addition to keeping city staff and officials organized and on track, the application would need to deliver current information right into the hands of stakeholders and make it accessible from any device, eliminating the need for enormous amounts of paper used for printed reports.



Furthermore, the City knew that automation processes would ensure no steps were missed while making critical information available online almost immediately for any stakeholder to access.

In 2011, the City hired a company that claimed to have the right technology. The implementation dragged out over two long years and in the end, the solution did not meet its promised potential. “We ended up just using it for agendas and report tracking, and we already had a system for that,” added Manton.

Despite the disappointing outcome, the City did not give up. In 2016 they met with the meeting management experts at eSCRIBE, and a dynamic partnership developed. “We quickly saw the flaws in their system and knew that our complete six-stage meeting package would deliver immediate results,” said Paul Mackin, vice-president, eSCRIBE.



eSCRIBE on Microsoft Azure – Dependability and Data Sovereignty in the Cloud

eSCRIBE's meeting and agenda management solution provides dramatic cost savings and efficiencies in one eco-friendly, automated package. And because it is built on Microsoft's 100% Canadian cloud – Azure – the City of Burlington is assured of 99.9% availability, flexibility, infinite scalability, and a level of security that can't be matched by other cloud providers. With encryption features and data residency requirements met, information stays right where it's supposed to be, accessible whenever and wherever it's needed.

“Offering eSCRIBE on Microsoft Azure is of tremendous value to our public sector clients who are trying to do more with less, all under the glare of public scrutiny,” added Mackin. “The cloud means a much faster time to implementation as well as reduced operating costs because the need to buy and maintain an infrastructure is eliminated. Microsoft's Canadian data centres stand up to Canadian privacy and sovereignty requirements. Data is resident on Canadian soil at all times.”



eSCRIBE and Microsoft CityNext

eSCRIBE has been a proud Microsoft partner for some time, and was one of the first technology companies to join Microsoft's CityNext consortium. CityNext is a Microsoft initiative that has been developed to provide a wide variety of solutions focused on creating more efficient local government operations. Cities, municipalities and townships face all of the same challenges as big government but have significantly smaller budgets to work with.

The Microsoft CityNext alternatives deliver secure, affordable and innovative methods to local governing bodies so that they can:

- Reduce cost
- Empower civil servants and elected officials
- Enable transparency
- Provide 24/7 self-serve information to citizens
- Communicate constituent value



The Benefits of eSCRIBE

As a cloud-based solution built on Microsoft Azure, eSCRIBE is helping cities and municipalities by delivering:

- A single platform to sort, manage and distribute reports and agendas to the right people, at the right time;
- Reduced complexity around scheduling meetings and people, with fewer errors;
- Better collaboration between committees and managers;
- Improved transparency – council members, City staff, constituents and stakeholders can access information online from any device;
- Online features that keep constituents up-to-date and engaged;
- A lowered carbon footprint by eliminating huge volumes of paper.

The City of Burlington customized the application by adding their own page of quick tips and FAQs, and embedding their internal website.



Easy to Learn – Internal Staff Coach Others

eSCRIBE's train-the-trainer program led to easy adoption. Report authors can come back to the monthly training sessions that are run by each Standing Committee Clerk, who quickly became experts in how to use the system.

While the software itself was impressive, staff at City Hall were most grateful for the leadership and understanding that eSCRIBE demonstrated throughout the transition. Explains Manton, "The experts at eSCRIBE listen to the customer. Change is always challenging, and although we had made a commitment to the new system, at times we dug in our heels, requesting more. eSCRIBE always delivered. They were clear, honest and professional – and that's why they're the experts."



All this, and Green too!

Since deployment of eSCRIBE's agenda and meeting management solution, the City of Burlington has realized savings in time, resources and paper costs. More importantly, perhaps, is their ability to be truly transparent and accessible – a commitment they take seriously.

Agendas are produced automatically, meetings are run efficiently, and time is spent on more high-value and mission-critical activities.

Now, reports that used to take two weeks to publish are available online within 24 hours. That means that Burlington's many Citizen Advisory Committees, tasked with everything from assessing bike lanes to millennials' issues, are able to observe and track the outcomes of Council and Committee meetings. And because the information is readily accessible, Burlington's citizens and businesses can be more easily engaged and participatory when it comes to matters of their City. Danielle Manton reports that they can now "turn on a dime based on community feedback."

And it's an eco-friendly solution that supports environmental initiatives advocated by Burlington. "The benefits are huge," concluded Manton. "We really love eSCRIBE. They've helped take us to a place and level of efficiency that will continue to have huge impact for years to come."

Digital Transformation

Engage Your Customers

With eSCRIBE Meeting Manager, it is now easy for citizens to provide feedback that can be captured, saved and shared with elected officials and public servants, enabling collaboration, transparency and meaningful two-way dialogue.

Empower Your Employees

eSCRIBE Meeting Manager has eliminated hundreds of man-hours spent preparing the meeting agendas, minutes and reports for City Council, committees, sub-committees and the public, ensuring transparency, accountability and better access to accurate information for decision-making.

Optimize Your Operations

With eSCRIBE, public servants and elected officials have been able to eliminate paper and automate the hours of manual processes spent copying, collating and distributing binders of minutes, agenda items, tasks and reports. Everything is now online, accessible and secure in Microsoft's Canadian cloud data centres