

CommonWatch FOI

Freedom of information request management on Microsoft Power Platform

Installation and evaluation guide · Version 1.0 · October 2026

CommonWatch FOI helps a public institution receive, track, review and answer access-to-information requests under Ontario's *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA). It installs into your own Microsoft Dataverse environment as a managed solution, so the requests, records and audit trail stay in your tenant.

This guide covers what you need, how to install CommonWatch FOI from Microsoft AppSource, what to set up first, and what Two Rivers Digital connects for you during onboarding.

What you get

- **The CommonWatch FOI staff workspace:** My work, a request file with a seven-stage process, the review desk for redaction, the legal clock, letters from approved templates, fees, third parties and appeals, retention and disposal, and an audit trail with export to Excel.
- **Server rules in Dataverse** that check every change: stages in order, a different person approves each release, fees are paid or waived before release, consultations are resolved, disposal needs two people and an approved retention schedule.
- **The legal clock:** 45 business days for requests from July 1, 2026, skipping weekends and Ontario holidays. A fee estimate over \$25 stops the clock under s. 45(3.2), and payment restarts it and moves the decision date by the stopped business days.
- **Six security roles:** CommonWatch Analyst, Coordinator, Approver, Read-only, Custodian (department searchers) and Renderer (the release service).

The package contains no request or requester records.

Requirements

- A Microsoft Dataverse environment. For Canadian public bodies we recommend the Canada region.
- A Power Platform administrator (System Administrator in the environment) to install.
- Microsoft Power Apps licences for staff who use CommonWatch FOI. Licences are purchased from Microsoft and are not part of CommonWatch FOI.
- For the requester portal: a Microsoft Power Pages site. Two Rivers sets it up with you during onboarding.
- For release copies: the CommonWatch FOI independent renderer, connected to your environment by Two Rivers during onboarding (see below).

Install from Microsoft AppSource

1. Open the CommonWatch FOI listing on Microsoft AppSource and select **Get it now**.
2. Sign in with your work account and choose the target environment.

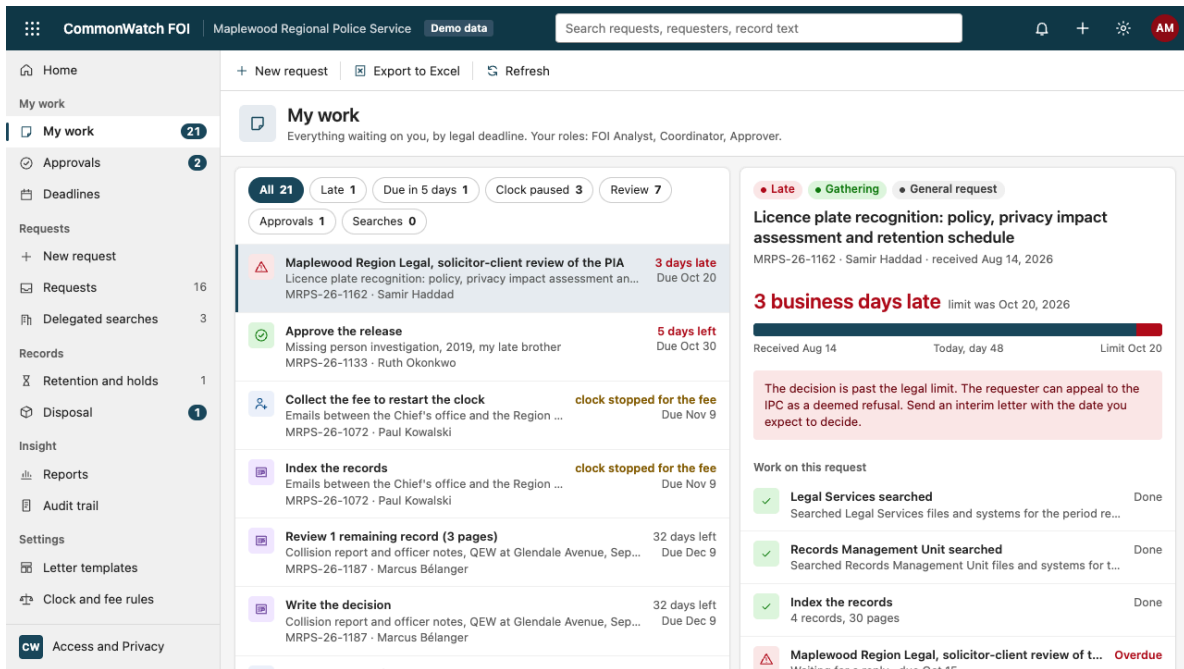


Figure 1: My work: everything waiting on you, by legal deadline. Fictional demonstration data.

3. Accept the terms. The Power Platform admin centre installs the package; this usually takes 10 to 20 minutes.
4. When the status shows **Installed**, open the **CommonWatch FOI** app from your environment's apps list.

To install in a test environment first, repeat the same steps there. Updates arrive as new versions of the managed solution.

Set up before first use

Give staff their roles

In the Power Platform admin centre, open the environment, then **Users**. Assign **CommonWatch Coordinator** to staff who receive and assign requests and manage the clock and fees, **CommonWatch Analyst** to staff who review records and write decisions, and **CommonWatch Approver** to managers who approve releases. A person can hold more than one role, but the server never lets the person who prepared a release approve it. Give **CommonWatch Custodian** to department staff who answer search requests. The **Renderer** role is for the release service only.

Settings

Open **Solutions**, then **Default solution**, then **Environment variables**, and set a current value for each one you need:

Setting	Default	What it does
Institution name	blank	Shown in the CommonWatch FOI header.
Reference prefix	CR	Letters before each reference, for example a prefix of OPS gives OPS-26-1001.
Retention schedule approved	no	Keep at no until your institution approves its retention schedule. While no, disposal is refused.

Setting	Default	What it does
Email delivery on	no	Set to yes once your mailbox is configured for server-side synchronization. While no, CommonWatch FOI prepares emails in Dynamics and does not send them.
Show demo badge	no	Set to yes only in demonstration environments.

Letter templates

CommonWatch FOI stores each letter with its template version and a fingerprint. A coordinator creates a template as a draft and then approves it; approved text cannot change, so a correction is a new version. Templates can use these fields: `{{requester}}`, `{{reference}}`, `{{subject}}`, `{{received}}`, `{{due}}`, `{{decision}}`, `{{fees}}` and `{{today}}`. Your access office supplies the approved wording.

Holiday calendar

Business days skip weekends and the holidays in s. 88 of Ontario's *Legislation Act, 2006*. Version 1.0 includes the calendar for July 2026 to December 2027. Confirm it with your counsel before go-live; Two Rivers updates it each year.

Onboarding by Two Rivers Digital

Two parts of CommonWatch FOI run outside the managed solution and are connected with you:

- **Release renderer.** Release copies are image-only PDFs rebuilt from the original and the saved marks by an independent service in Microsoft Azure (Canada Central), so redacted text cannot be recovered from the release. Two Rivers connects a renderer to your environment with a managed identity that holds only the Renderer role.
- **Requester portal.** A Power Pages site where requesters submit and follow their requests, read published letters and download their release. Two Rivers installs it into a site in your tenant, with your notice of collection.

The screenshot displays the CommonWatch FOI interface for a specific request. The top navigation bar includes the 'CommonWatch FOI' logo, the organization name 'Maplewood Regional Police Service', and a search bar. The left sidebar contains a menu with options like 'Home', 'My work', 'Approvals', 'Deadlines', 'Requests', and 'Settings'. The main content area shows the request details for 'Towing services contract, bid evaluations and invoices, ...'. The request is currently in the 'Review' stage, which is highlighted in blue. The progress bar shows the stages: Received, Assigned, Gathering, Review (13 d, 5 open), Approval, Disclosed, and Closed. Below the progress bar, there are sections for 'This stage: Review' and 'Legal clock'. The 'This stage: Review' section shows a list of tasks assigned to Aisha Mensah, including 'Fees: \$67.80', 'Reviewed 6 records (29 pag...)', 'Review 3 remaining records...', 'Write the decision', 'Peninsula Recovery Inc.', 'Falls Towing Ltd.', and 'Twelve Mile Towing'. The 'Legal clock' section shows a 34 business day clock to decide by Dec 11, 2026, with a progress bar indicating 23 of 57 days completed. The 'At a glance' section provides a summary of the request, including the request type, requester, received date, fees, searches, and pages.

Figure 2: The request file: the seven stages, this stage's work by role, and the legal clock.

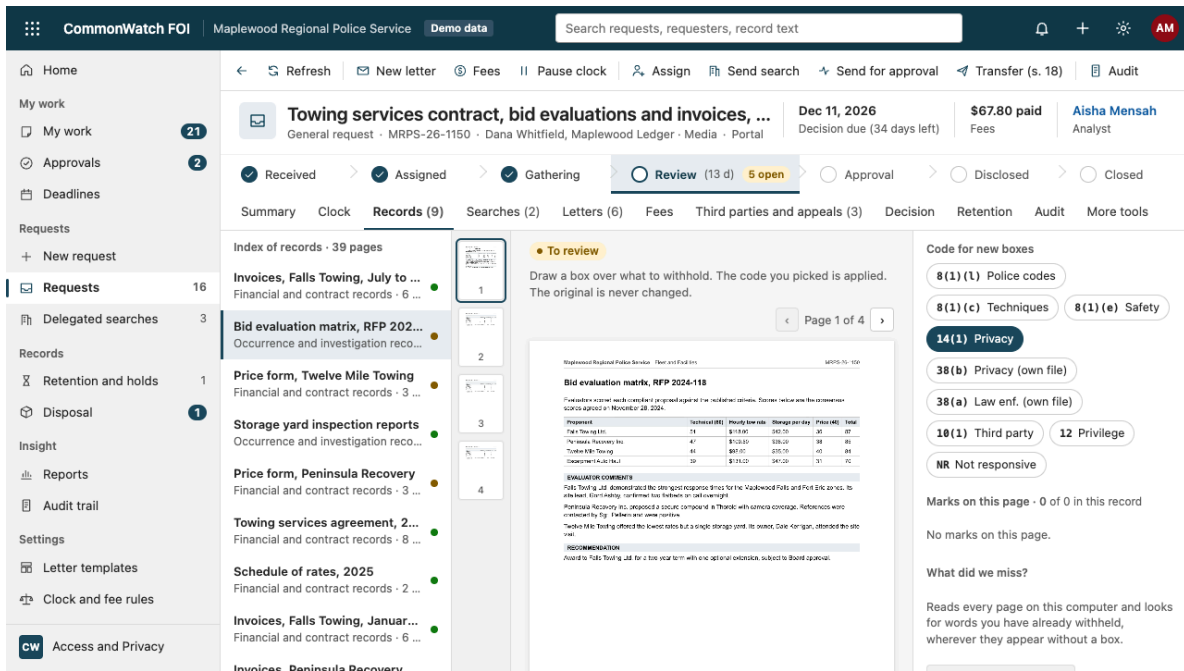


Figure 3: The review desk: index of records, the original page, exemption codes and “What did we miss?”.

Migration of past requests, integrations, training and ongoing support are agreed separately.

A first request, end to end

1. **New request:** enter a paper or email request with its date stamp, or receive it from the portal. Choose the type and requester, then **Acknowledge and assign**.
2. **Searches:** send a search to each department that holds records. Each searcher attests their search; a different person accepts it.
3. **Records:** attach the originals. In the review desk, pick an exemption code, draw boxes, view every page and select **Rebuild release**. Use **What did we miss?** to find withheld words elsewhere in the record.
4. **Fees:** work out the estimate under Regulation 823 and record payment. The clock stops and restarts automatically.
5. **Decision:** write the decision and send it for approval. A different approver approves the release, and the requester sees the decision letter and records on the portal.
6. **Close and retain:** record the outcome for the IPC annual report, close the request and apply the retention rule.

Data, privacy and security

- Requests, records, letters and the audit trail are stored in your Dataverse environment and protected by your Microsoft security, sign-in and retention.
- Originals are never changed; each is fingerprinted with SHA-256. Every change goes through the server rules and is recorded as an event.
- Text recognition for searching pages and for **What did we miss?** runs in the staff member’s browser. Page images are not sent to any outside service.
- CommonWatch FOI sends no telemetry to Two Rivers Digital and does not use your data to train AI models.

Removing CommonWatch FOI

Uninstall the **CommonWatch FOI** managed solution from the environment's Solutions list. This removes the CommonWatch FOI tables and their data; export anything you need to keep first.

Support

Email hello@tworiversdigital.ca with your organization, the CommonWatch FOI version, the screen and what happened. Do not send requester records, passwords or tokens by email. Product information, privacy policy and terms: tworiversdigital.ca/solutions/commonwatch.

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