

## City of Richmond Enables Smooth, Secure Access to Multiple Government Services

*MyRichmond uses ForgeRock Identity Platform to make wide range of services securely available to citizens of Richmond, British Columbia*

“All of these government offices are part of the same city. Why do I need separate logins and passwords for each one? Can’t their systems all talk to one another?”

Citizens everywhere ask questions like these. In the rush to make online services available, municipal agencies have rolled out applications, databases and portals that work well individually but that result in a poor user experience when they try to work together. The City of Richmond, a ForgeRock customer, decided to do better.

### **Transforming online services from business-centric to citizen-centric**

With a population of nearly a quarter-million, the City of Richmond in British Columbia, Canada, had gradually offered its citizens online access to traditional services such as property taxes, utilities, public works, and waste/recycling schedules. Most agencies built out their portals independently, and citizens ended up accumulating multiple separate accounts, each with a different set of credentials.

“We fielded lots of complaints over the years from citizens and businesses,” says Grant Fengstad, director of information technologies and CIO of Richmond. “They didn’t like that they needed a username and PIN for utilities, another for recycling, another for property taxes and so on. And they were right. The model that had evolved was business-centric, focused on each separate business function the city provides. We decided to move to a citizen-centric model, with a cohesive, unified view of what Richmond does for its residents.”

Fengstad’s IT team saw that single sign-on would be a big part of that model. They also developed the broader concept of a personalization portal on top of a digital ecosystem. Citizens would enter the portal with a username and password, then access services and information from several independent systems through a uniform user interface.

*“ForgeRock was a key enabler for MyRichmond simply because of how much it handed us in a box.”*

**— Grant Fengstad**  
Director of Information Technology and CIO  
City of Richmond, BC, Canada

### **Silos of data and disparate identity mechanisms**

Each of the systems had its own repository of customers, data and transactions, so one big hurdle was to pull data together from those silos. Also, while the systems were mature, they had disparate login mechanisms that would all need to work together in Richmond’s new model.

“Citizens have high expectations when they give their data to the government,” says Fengstad. “Like private industry, we always have system security in mind, but unlike most private companies, we’re subject to regulations and freedom-of-information requests to ensure we’re providing services to citizens as best we can. Adopting transparency, implementing user-managed access and giving people control over the use of their personal information is important in government.”

Fengstad’s team planned the MyRichmond personalization portal around single sign-on, with foundational services for identity and access management. They conceived a digital ecosystem with least privilege access among services. Only trusted, authenticated users would be able to enter MyRichmond and they would be able to access only authorized data. Most of all, MyRichmond would be based on prominent standards and protocols.

None of the individual applications Richmond was using at the time checked all of those boxes, but the ForgeRock Identity Platform did.

### Building the MyRichmond personalization portal alongside ForgeRock

During their decades of experience in identity and access management, Fengstad's team had implemented the ForgeRock Identity Platform on other projects. Knowing they would need a variety of foundational services to get their systems talking to one another, they chose ForgeRock for comprehensive access management to protect customer identity and data.

"The ForgeRock Identity Platform sits alongside our digital ecosystem," says Fengstad, "which is made up of adaptors that connect into our systems. That ecosystem makes the data available through a flexible RESTful interface, then allows us to consume that data easily through microservices. The MyRichmond portal is the first place in which we've taken advantage of those RESTful APIs to present all that data."

The MyRichmond engine relies on the ForgeRock Identity Platform for standards like OAuth, OAuth 2.0 and SAML. MyRichmond also uses the platform for authentication and authorization through a RESTful interface, for user self-service, identity synchronization and directory services.

"We quickly built custom modules to enhance the way some of the ForgeRock authentication chains worked, including a few schema changes and extensions," says Vincent Chu, Manager of IT Innovation and Development. "But ForgeRock saved us the trouble of writing and implementing our own authentication services. More important, right out of the box it gave us customer services like password reset and full protection of all web assets in MyRichmond with the policy agent. It allowed us to roll out the portal with the City of Richmond brand and customize the entire UI to integrate it more closely with the MyRichmond engine."

### Taking MyRichmond into the future

The launch of MyRichmond caps the effort by Fengstad's team to pull disparate municipal services into one portal with single sign-on, authentication and privacy protection for citizens. The city has publicized the portal through display ads, community centers, public events, print ads, social media and inserts to property tax notices. For Fengstad, the main adoption metrics are user profiles created and MyRichmond logins; so far, the numbers are twice as high as he had expected.

As adoption grows, the portal is fulfilling hundreds of authentication requests per second. With performance monitoring tools, Fengstad's team is making sure that MyRichmond and the ForgeRock modules can comfortably handle thousands of authentication requests per second.

"MyRichmond is built on microservices that any front end or application can call," says Fengstad. "That means we can start using it in other presentation systems and even mobile apps. Also, we look forward to adding other ForgeRock features like push authentication, passwordless authentication and multi-factor authentication. ForgeRock has enabled and facilitated our fairly easy implementation and rollout of MyRichmond, simply because of how much it handed us in a box."

Chu agrees. "The effort it has taken us to get ForgeRock up, running and usable in our environment is really minimal."

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