This thesis discusses a number of things. The first chapter sets the stage for the rest of the thesis with a discussion of the development of archives in Canada generally and municipal archives specifically. The reasons why municipal archives have been created as well as why, for the most part, they remain underdeveloped will be discussed in detail. Examples of various municipal archives are used to illustrate the various causes of municipal archival development. This history of municipal archival development in Canada sets the broad historical context for understanding the history of the City of Winnipeg Archives and Records Control Branch of the City Clerk’s Department.

An overview of the development of the City of Winnipeg Archives and Records Control Branch is presented in chapter two. It will illustrate how this archives has developed and presents reasons for its slow progress towards a full archival program. To date, the City of Winnipeg still does not have a full archival program in place with, for example, a complete description of its records.

In order to contribute to the development of such a full archival programme the third chapter of this thesis contains the first (albeit still preliminary) description using the Rules for Archival Description (RAD) of one of the most important bodies of record in the archives--the Winnipeg city council's records or fonds from 1874 to 1971. RAD is a standardized descriptive format in wide use in Canadian archives. The third chapter opens with a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of archival description in what is often called the contextual approach to archival administration. This approach (rooted in an understanding of the provenance of the records) has proved important for a number of reasons. It assists in records retrieval, protects records as evidence and assists in the administrative control of records over their lifespan (all of which are important to any municipality). The importance and use of standardized archival description (such as RAD) are also discussed. The final chapter of the thesis concludes with a preliminary description using RAD of the City of Winnipeg Council Fonds and its components (1874-1971). These records occupy approximately 233 metres of shelf space in the archives but only make up a small proportion of the total number of records available for use at the archives. This description only covers the records of the City of Winnipeg council. There are many other records in the archives from other agencies within the city as well as from the other former municipalities which now make up the City of Winnipeg. These records await formal description and are not included in the description provided here.