



## Memorandum

Ref: 114919

Date: April 13, 2021

To: All BC Public Service Employees

Re: Retention of Chat Messages in Microsoft Teams

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As Chief Records Officer, under the *Information Management Act*, I am responsible for policy relating to the retention of government information. As part of that responsibility, I have directed that standalone one-on-one chats, group chats, and meeting chats be automatically deleted from MS Teams after 30 days, effective May 31, 2021. Conversations within a channel will be retained until manually deleted or the channel is decommissioned.

MS Teams is a virtual communication and collaboration tool; it is a chat-based digital workspace within Office 365 that supports conversations, meetings, file-sharing and document collaboration. Microsoft Teams was deployed across government in April 2020 to foster virtual collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within MS Teams there are two broad categories of chat:

1. Standalone one-on-one or group chats, meeting chats, and
2. Conversations within a channel

At the time of deployment, no retention or deletion policies were applied because the rollout was accelerated from months to weeks to support our workforce in working remotely. This means that until now, all chat records were retained indefinitely.

Automatically deleting these messages within 30 days should avoid the need to “hold” transitory information unnecessarily. While chat messages are usually transitory in nature, BC Public Service employees are reminded that it is the content of a chat message that determines whether it is transitory - not the form. Important government information should be stored in an appropriate recordkeeping system. Chat messages can be copied and pasted from MS Teams into a word document that can be saved in such a system.

For more information on how to effectively and responsibly use collaboration tools such as MS Teams, please see the [Records Management Guides and Learning](#) webpage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry Pridmore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kerry Pridmore  
Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Records Officer  
Corporate Information and Records Management Office  
Ministry of Citizens' Services