

FAQs

Use of Non-Government Email Accounts for Work Purposes

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is a government record?

A record created by or received by a department or other public body in the conduct of its affairs and includes a Cabinet record, transitory record and an abandoned record. Disposal of a government record must be sanctioned by a records retention and disposal schedule (RRDS) that has been approved by the Government Records Committee (GRC).

2. What are some examples of non-government email accounts?

Examples of non-government email accounts include:

— janedoe@hotmail.com, janedoe@gmail.com, johndoe@a_custom_url.ca, etc.

3. Can I use a non-government email account for work purposes?

Individuals are issued an email account to conduct work on behalf of a department or other public body. These email accounts are administered by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) or similar organizational group and proper security precautions are applied.

Records created as part of normal business of a department or other public body must be captured in an approved recordkeeping format and location. This supports an efficient and effective IM program for the department or other public body and that files are accessible in the event of operational requirements, access to information requests, litigation, etc.

If there is a business requirement to use a non-government email account you will need to consult with our immediate supervisor and those responsible for IM within your department or other public body to determine if an exception is necessary. Approval from the permanent head (or designate) of your department or other public body is required.

4. Are emails sent to my personal/non-government email account government records?

They can be if they involve information about the business function of government.

An email sent through a private email account used to do government business falls under the province's Management of Information and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (ATIPP) laws, and measures should be taken to store the email in an appropriate recordkeeping format. It is the responsibility of the individual to forward/transfer the email sent or received from the personal or other non-government email account to an approved recordkeeping format for long term accessibility.

5. What should I do if I suspect the content of an email sent to a personal/non-government email account should be captured as an official government record?

If you feel that the content of an email sent to a personal/non-government account should be retained as a government record, it is your responsibility to transfer/forward the email to an official government storage area. This will ensure the record is available for future reference in your department.

Once transferred to an appropriate recordkeeping format, the original email must be deleted from the personal/non-government account immediately.

It is recommended the individual who received the email to their personal/non-government account respond to the sender and advise that all inquiries relating to work on behalf of a department or other public body should be sent to an official government-issued email account (indicate specific email address if appropriate).

6. Will consultants hired to complete work on behalf of the province require a government-issued email account?

An exception to use a personal/non-government account for work in support of government must be specifically approved by the permanent head (or designate) of the department or other public body.

A consultant would not require a government-issued email account and able to use a non-government issued account (if approved as noted above) provided that all government records relevant to a project are transferred/forwarded to an official government storage area and that appropriate protections to safeguard the information are in place. It is recommended that an employee in the department or other public body accept the responsibility for capturing the records.

Processes should be developed by the department or other public body to confirm proper records transfer, retention and documentation practices are followed. This will support the department or other public body is meeting its legislative compliance requirements.

7. Am I permitted to use my personal or non-government email account?

Individuals may only use a personal non-government email account, or forward email from their government-issued account to a non-government email account under either of the following conditions and in all cases email must be transferred to an appropriate recordkeeping format as soon as possible:

- When the use of the non-government account for government work purposes has been specifically approved by the head of the public body or approved designate to whom the individual reports.
- When the government-issued email account is inaccessible;
- When the government approved IT asset assigned is malfunctioning (i.e., mobile device, laptop, tablet, etc.);
- When the content is already publicly available; or
- When the email is of a personal nature that is either not work related or pertains to the person's relationship with the department or other public body as their employer.

Note: If personal or confidential information is emailed using a personal or other non-government account it should be password protected and distribution should be limited to the least amount necessary to deal with the exceptional circumstance.

8. What do I do if I have to use my personal account for government business?

In the rare circumstance that an individual must temporarily use a personal or other non-government email account, without prior exemption approval as noted above, to transmit a government record, they need to ensure that the record is saved to an appropriate recordkeeping format. This returns the record to the proper custody and control of the department or other public body and provides accessibility of the record.

Once saved to a recordkeeping format and managed appropriately, the initial email should be immediately deleted from the individual's personal or non-government email account.

Personal or confidential information emailed to a personal/non-government account must be limited to the least amount necessary to deal with the exceptional circumstance. Email sent outside of the government network may not be secure while in transit and the use of encryption is recommended. Please consult with resources responsible for IM in your department or other public body for advice on encryption tools.

If a legitimate ongoing business need to use a non-government email account is identified, the department or other public body must complete the required form, obtain approval from the permanent head (or designate) and consult with the OCIO on the procurement of the account/service to ensure appropriate security requirements are met.

Supporting Materials

Directive – Email Management

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/directive-email-management.pdf>

Directive – Acceptable Use of the Government Network and/or IT Assets

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/im/employees/asset-use>

Guideline – Email Management

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/guideline-email-management.pdf>

Webpage – Use of Non-Government Email Accounts for Work Purposes

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/im/policy-instruments/non-government-email-accounts>

FYI - 7-ZIP and WinZip

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/files/im-employees-pdf-fyi-information-protection-7-zip-and-winzip-what-you-should-know.pdf>

OCIO Website

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/ocio/>

Version History

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2016-12-16	1.0
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