

MEMORANDUM

CSC 13-2012

DATE: February 22, 2012

TO: Co-Chairs and Members
of the Corporate Services Committee

FROM: Brian Hutchings
Commissioner of Corporate Services/Treasurer

SUBJECT: Retention of Electronic Communications

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 26, 2012, a question was raised regarding the length of time that electronic communications are kept. The following is in response to that question.

The Region's backups are kept on computer tape storage with some kept onsite and some in an offsite location. The schedule and retention period is as follows:

- A backup is performed nightly and these tapes are kept for two weeks and then recycled
- A weekly backup is performed on Saturday night and these tapes are kept for eight weeks and then recycled
- A monthly backup is performed on the last Saturday night of the month and these tapes are kept for 12 months and then recycled
- The December monthly backup becomes the yearly backup and these tapes are kept for five years and then recycled

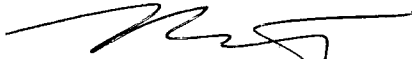
These backup tapes store a copy of the data at a particular point in time. Therefore, how long data is retained depends on when the data was in the system and when the backup was taken.

The following examples may help clarify the situation:

- An email from an external source is received by a single individual at the Region on Tuesday, February 21. That person deletes the email the next day, February 22. That email will be retained on the nightly backup tapes for two weeks. However, since that email is not in the live system when the weekly, monthly or yearly backups are made, it will not be on any of those tapes and so it is retained for only two weeks.
- An email from an external source is received by several people at the Region on Tuesday, February 21. Most of those individuals delete the email within a day or two, but one person retains the email for a month. In this scenario, the email is in the live system when the weekly backup is taken and also when the monthly backup is taken and so will be retained on tape for 12 months.
- An email that is in the live system on December 31 will be retained on tape for five years.

- Similar scenarios apply to other forms of electronic communications – text messages, Blackberry Messenger messages and pin-to-pin communications.

Consistent with best practices, the Region regularly and routinely performs a backup in order to make a copy of its data and systems which can be used to restore the original after a data loss event. Backups have traditionally had two distinct purposes. The primary purpose is to recover data after its loss due to data deletion, corruption, human error, hardware failure, etc. The secondary purpose of backups is to recover data from an earlier time, according to a user-defined data retention policy.



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