

For Members of the Legislative Assembly and their Constituency Offices Staff

Transferring Constituency Records to the Legislative Library of British Columbia Frequently Asked Questions

Wrapping up the Constituency Office at the end of your representative's time as Member of the Legislative Assembly is a busy time. We would like to invite you and consider how to attend to your Office's constituency records at the end of an MLA's term.

The following frequently asked questions will guide you with what to do with constituency files after which Members exit their role as MLAs:

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Below are the questions and their respective answers.

1. I'm retiring from my role as MLA and need to close my Constituency Office. What do we do with all the constituency office files we have?

The exiting MLA determines what to do with constituency office records. The Legislative Library of British Columbia can help out. It offers to store and preserve any member's constituency records, as well as their personal political papers, for a period of up to five years, once a signed transfer agreement has been signed. The exiting MLA has five years at their disposal to decide whether to receive these records back or have them permanently preserved as part of the Legislative Library's MLA Papers Archive.

2. Why should the constituency files be transferred to the Legislative Library?

By transferring your constituency files and MLA personal records to the Legislative Library, you are actively helping to ensure the preservation of your legacy during the time period you represented your constituency in Parliament. This includes, among others, records related to your contributions to legislative history and advocacy campaigns on issues of concern to your constituency. These records could be made available for the benefit of future and current MLAs, their staff, and researchers.

The Legislative Library has a rich collection of materials of interest to BC policymakers and those interested in understanding BC's legislative history and politics. The collection features topics like politics, health, education, history, economics, and more. The Legislative Library is currently in the process of acquiring the papers of elected Members who served in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia since 1871, up to and including the present. This includes all recorded information used by an MLA acting in that capacity, regardless of their digital or physical format.

The MLA Papers Archives is intended to reflect and support the diversity of the Province of British Columbia, its constituents, and the Members who represent them. The collection incorporates records on a range of political, economic, social, religious, and community issues. It also strives to support intellectual freedom and research by providing access to a range of perspectives, expressions, and experiences.

The records created by MLAs provide unique insight into the legislative process and reflect each Members' individual contributions to that process. These records capture the day-to-day activities of Members, document their interactions with constituents, represent the issues of the time, and exemplify the functions and role of the BC government at the constituent level. These carry with them a rich historical significance and have enduring value for British Columbians.

3. What type of records does the Library collect?

The Legislative Library collects all **non-financial** recorded information created and/or accumulated and used by MLAs acting in that capacity. Examples of constituency non-financial records may include:

- ✓ Constituency meetings documentation
- ✓ Correspondence between MLAs and their constituency
- ✓ Speeches and position papers
- ✓ Issue files
- ✓ Casework files
- ✓ Subject files
- ✓ Legislation and campaign files
- ✓ Publicity materials
- ✓ Photographs, recordings, and much more

In addition, the Library acquires Members' personal paper. These records document aspects of the MLAs' life outside their parliamentary responsibilities. Examples of personal papers may include:

- ✓ Personal diaries,
- ✓ General correspondence
- ✓ Biographical information
- ✓ Manuscripts and Research interests
- ✓ Photographs, recordings, and much more

4. What type of records the Library does not collect?

The Legislative Library does not collect the following records:

☒ **Ministerial Records.** These records are created by MLAs in their roles as cabinet ministers. Considered government records, these documents must be stored separately. Their archival preservation is captured by the Government Records Service for the Government of British Columbia. They are disposed of according to the [Government's formal records management policies and guidance](#).

☒ **Constituency Financial Records.** Financial records are records of the Legislative Assembly. For more guidance on how to manage such records, please refer to the [Transition Guide for Members of the Legislative Assembly](#).

Examples of financial records include the following (as applicable):

- A full print out of the general ledger from the date the constituency office opened until it was closed.
- A financial system back-up or spreadsheet copies on a flash drive with a label identifying the type of computer accounting system used (e.g., Sage, Excel spreadsheet, QuickBooks, etc.).

- The box with the accounting software CD, manual and license ID, along with a notation of all user IDs and passwords.
- Bank statements, cancelled cheques, supplier invoices, bank reconciliations.
- Expense claims for in-constituency travel.
- Contracts and agreements.

Financial records should be clearly labelled, boxed for storage, and shipped to:

Financial Services
 Legislative Assembly of British Columbia
 614 Government Street
 Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

☒ Transitory Records. These are records of temporary usefulness, needed only for a limited period of time in order to complete a routine action or prepare a final record. Transitory records include things like meeting arrangements, preliminary notes, copies made for convenience, and non-significant drafts. If an email, significant draft, or other record is essential to understanding a decision-making process or activity, then the record is not transitory and should be kept.

5. MLA personal papers are interfiled with the constituency records. Is that acceptable, or should my staff refile them separately?

If you decide to transfer your files to the Legislative Library, please don't worry about reorganizing them. We accept your files in the state they are in. We prefer to maintain the original order and organization structure of your files to ensure the integrity of your recordkeeping practices.

6. Our records contain personal and confidential information. How does the Library ensure that the records are secured?

The Legislative Library follows privacy law fully. Any private information in your records will be protected under the relevant legislation. Your files will be stored in a secured location, to which only a limited number of authorized personnel have access, exclusively for monitoring and processing purposes. Access to records will be fully restricted during the first five years of their storage, after which access restrictions will be put on records to ensure confidentiality and the protection of personal information in accordance with privacy laws.

7. What happens to the records once they are transferred to the Legislative Library?

After transferring your papers to the Legislative Library, the records will be stored securely for a five-year period. During this time, you have the option to receive your records back, should you want to do so. After the first five-year period, the records will become part of the Legislative Library's permanent collection.

8. Will I still have access to my papers files after transferring them to the Library?

You will always have the right to access your papers. During the first five years, while the records are untouchable by anyone else, you are still able to access the records. Once the records have been in the Legislative Library's custody for the initial five-year period, you and other members of the public may have access to the records, while taking into consideration access restrictions applied to the records.

9. For how long does the Library retain our files?

The library offers to securely store your records for an untouchable period of five years. After five years, and in accordance with a signed transfer agreement, your records will be reviewed and appraised by a professional archivist to determine their archival value. Records with enduring value will be preserved indefinitely as part of the Legislative Library's permanent MLA Papers Archives. Records with no enduring value may be returned back to you or securely culled from our collection according to the signed transfer agreement.

10. What happens after the initial five years of storing our office records at the Legislative Library?

In accordance with a signed transfer agreement, your donated records will be handled by a professional archivist. The archivist will appraise the records for their enduring archival value; arrange and describe the records based on international standards to facilitate and allow access to the records; ensure the long-term preservation of the records by conducting conservation treatments as needed; and promote awareness to the records to encourage researchers to use them.

11. Who has access to the records once they are transferred to the Legislative Library?

During the initial five years period, your records are not accessible to anyone except yourself. Authorized staff at the Library have access to the storage space but your specific records will be untouchable by anyone.

Once records are under the control and custody of the Legislative Library, authorized Library staff have access to the records for the purpose of processing and maintaining them. The records will also be accessed by researchers after they have been properly arranged and described.

12. As an outgoing MLA, do I need to sign an agreement to formalize the transfer process?

Yes. To formalize the process of transferring personal papers and constituency records to the Legislative Library, we ask that the outgoing MLA responsible for the constituency records signs a Transfer Agreement with the Legislative Library. The agreement will lay out the handling, use, and access conditions related to the records.

13. How do I prepare the physical files for transfer?

Please pack each box carefully to avoid damage and deterioration. The following tips are provided as a guide:

- ✓ **Box similar records together.** Records in the same box should have the same classification or, if you're not using a classification system, should have come from the same activity or function (i.e. Constituent correspondence). Please, do not place different types of records within the same box. Travel expense receipts should not go into the same box as case files.
- ✓ **Keep files upright with labels clearly visible.** Place records so that their labels are easily read.
- ✓ **Arrange files in order within each box.** If you have a file list, ensure that the files in the box follow that list. If you're not using a file list, please prepare a list based on the contents of the box in their original order for use in the office.
- ✓ **Group together records that are classified as part of the same or created by the same department.** This arranges files in groups by their expected life span and the type of records they contain. It allows a more efficient review of the documents.
- ✓ **Label special media special media (like CDs or DVDs) carefully.** Include information about the content stored, so they can be easily identified and that they can be processed and stored safely.

- ✓ **Please, do not:**
 - **over-pack** – a box should close easily, sides should not bulge, weight must not exceed 11.25 kg (25 lb).
 - **under-pack** - if records do not completely fill a box, fill the balance of the box with inert packing material (e.g., crumpled paper) to support the records and prevent the box from collapsing.
 - **fold material to fit a box.** Pack special media/formats appropriately in boxes that will accommodate their size without any folding. Flat maps and plans may be carefully rolled.

14. How do I prepare the electronic files for transfer?

Ensure all your important electronic records (including emails) are filed in your constituency office's recordkeeping system.

- ✓ Classify and locate official file copies. What you need to know:
 - ❖ Official file copies: Documents that are not duplicates and that document decision-making, set policy or procedures, require a reply or action, or reflect office business processes.
 - ❖ Accessibility: **Remove any encryption, passwords or access restrictions** on records you are filing (such as .pst files), to ensure that they are accessible to authorized staff.

- ✓ Delete documents that are transitory in nature (for example, work/life announcements, rough notes, non-significant drafts, etc.) or which are duplicates/copies of records already filed in the office recordkeeping system.
- ✓ Remove any non-work related or personal items (for example, resumes, professional association correspondence, family photographs, etc.).

Your electronic documents can be migrated from your filing system onto removable media (such as hard drives, thumb drives, etc.). Please ensure using only new (previously unused) removable media. Used media tend to have a shorter life span.

If using hard drives:

- ✓ Get two portable hard drives, of different brands, and put the same data on both. This protects against drive failure until the Legislative Library staff can process and migrate the files to a more permanent storage medium.
- ✓ Do not password protect portable hard drives.
- ✓ Choose hard drives that work with both PC and Mac computers, and brands that come with a 3-year warranty (or longer if offered).

15. Who should I contact for more information and to start the transfer process?

For more information about the MLA Papers Archives and about the process of transferring records to the Legislative Library, please contact:

Peter Gourlay
Legislative Library Director
Phone: 250-387-6508
Email: Peter.Gourlay@leg.bc.ca

Thank you in advance for serving your constituency and the people of British Columbia also by preserving your legacy and its related records.