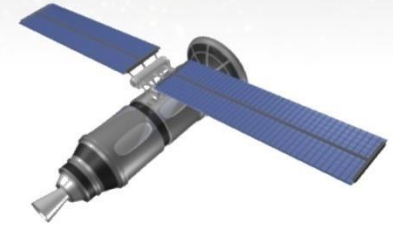
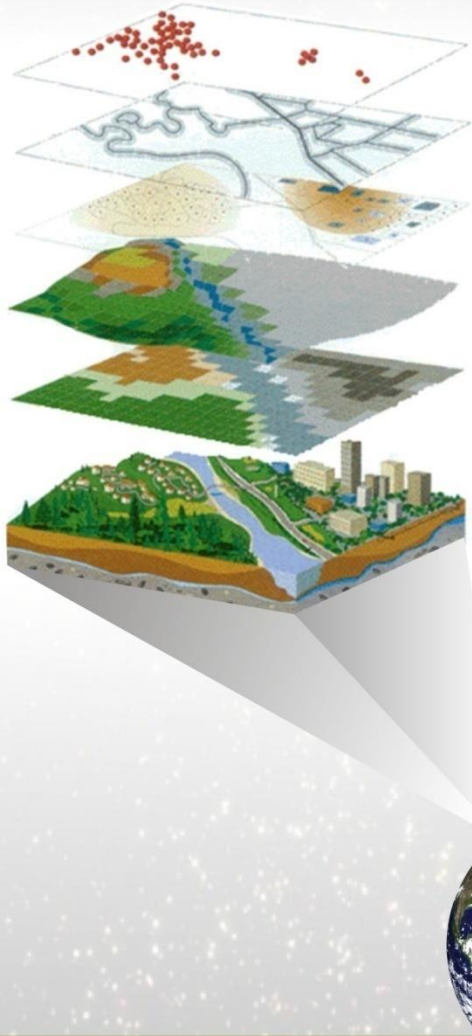


# THOUGHTS ON ADDING GEO-RECORDS TO THE PILOT STUDY ON BEST PRACTICES FOR CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS



**DR. BARRY WELLAR. C.M., GISP**

PAST PRESIDENT, URISA (1978)

PROFESSOR EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

PRESIDENT, INFORMATION RESEARCH BOARD

[wellar.barry@gmail.com](mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com)

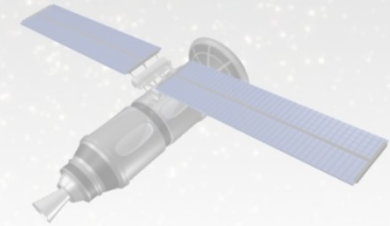
<http://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

***Keynote Presentation***

BeSpatial / URISA Ontario  
Eastern Regional Event  
*Queen's University*

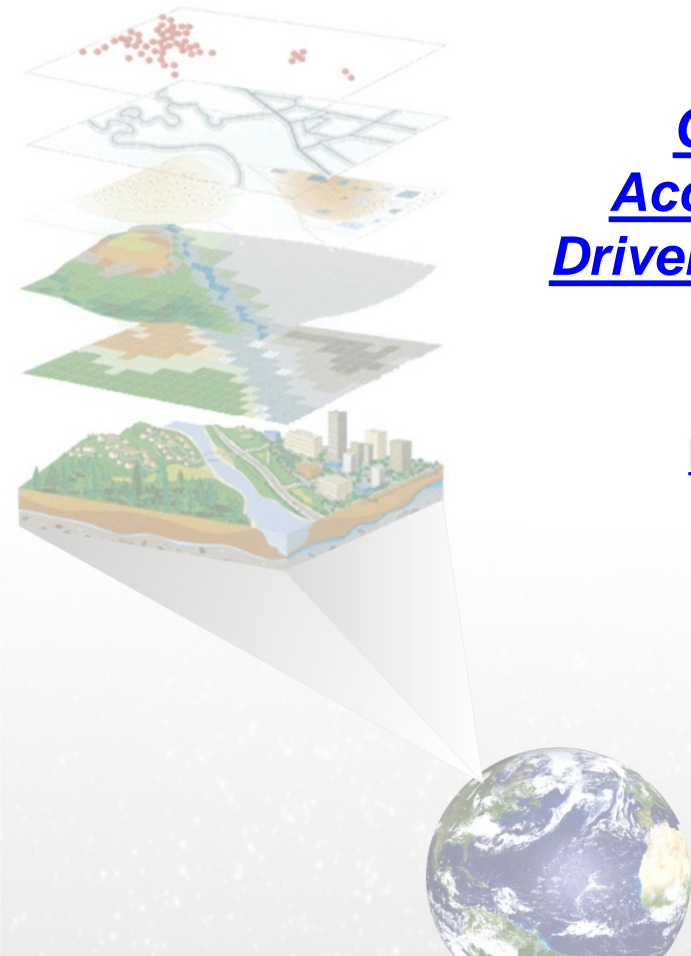
KINGSTON, ONTARIO

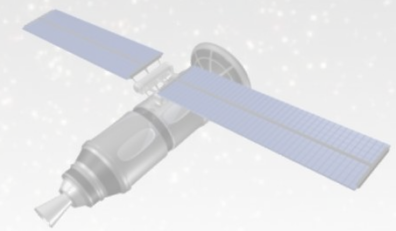
June 29, 2023



***Chronicling the Use of Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring the Standard of Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice***

<http://wellar.ca/informationresearch/Publications.html>



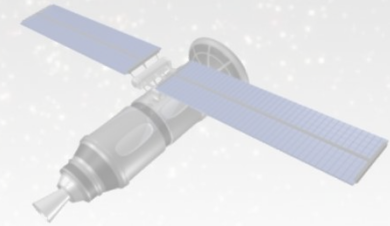


**POLICY SUPPORT**  
**PROGRAM SUPPORT**  
**PLANNING SUPPORT**  
**OPERATIONS SUPPORT**  
**LOGISTICS SUPPORT**  
**MARKETING SUPPORT**  
**ANALYTICS SUPPORT**  
**MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS**  
**CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS**

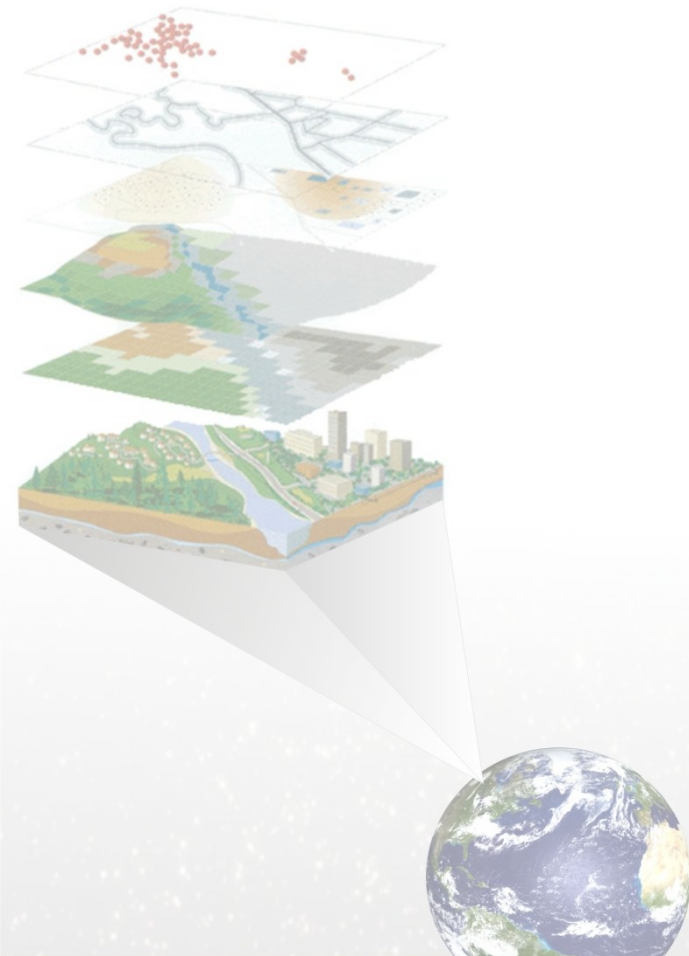


[Slides for the Closing Presentation: 2019 GIS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY,  
URBAN AND REGIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION](#)

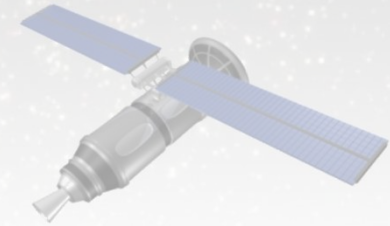
# ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES



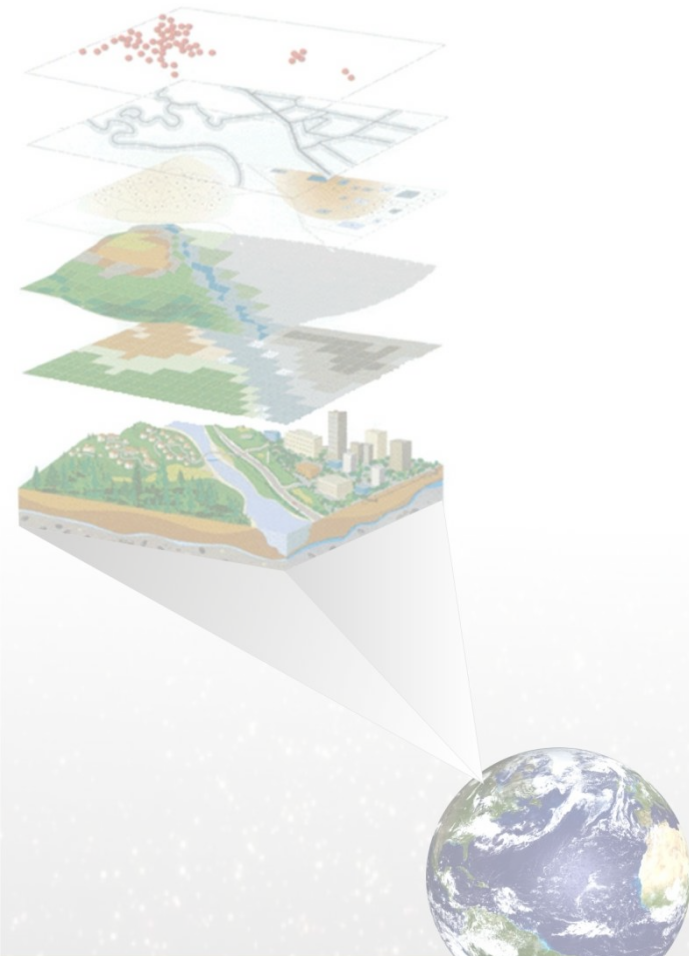
- Access to Food Stores
- Access to Medical Services
- Access to Transit
- Aggregate Material Locations
- Air Quality Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Air Traffic Characteristics
- Animal Habitat Changes/Impacts
- Automated Vehicle Trip Volumes/Patterns
- Bike Path Traffic O/D Features
- Climate Zone Shifts
- Commuter Routes and Sheds
- Communicable Disease Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Conservation Regions
- Cropland Inventories
- Demographic Changes/Patterns/Impacts
- Desertification Zone Changes/Patterns /Impacts
- Earthquake Zones



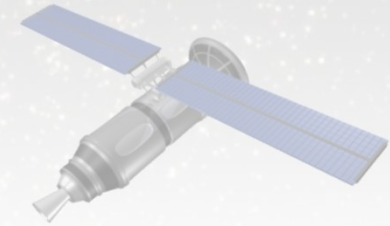
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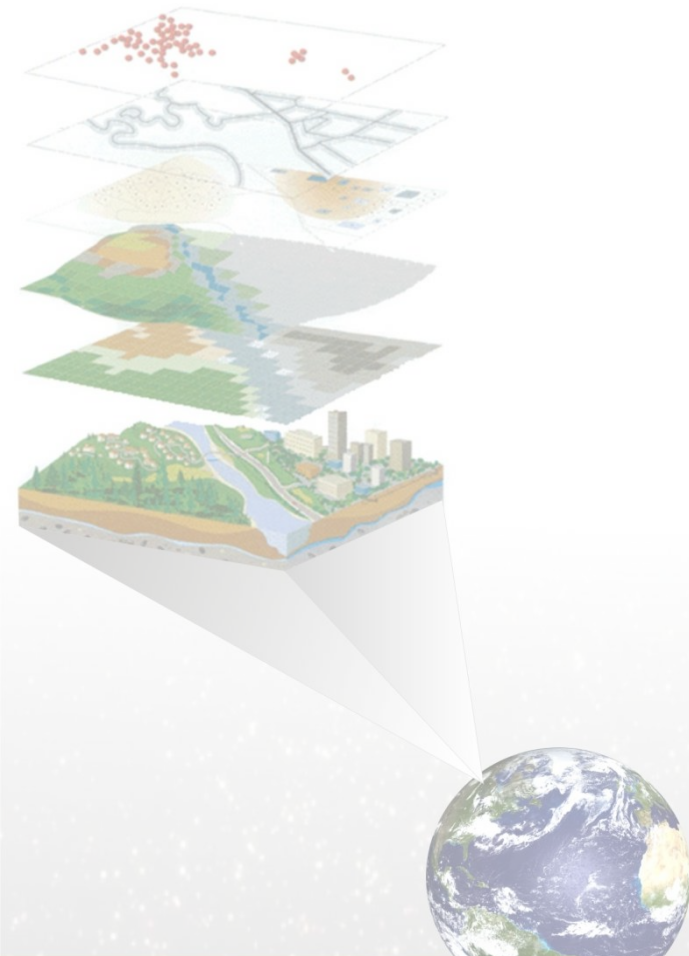
- Ecosystem Boundaries
- EMO Dispatches
- Energy Supply-Demand Relationships
- Epidemic Spread Characteristics
- Farmland Characteristics
- Fish Stock Inventories
- Flood Events/Impacts
- Floodplain Boundaries
- Freshwater Demand/Supply Patterns
- Greenspace Plans
- Habitat Changes/Impacts
- Housing Supply-Demand Relationships
- Hurricane Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Icefield Changes/Patterns/Impacts



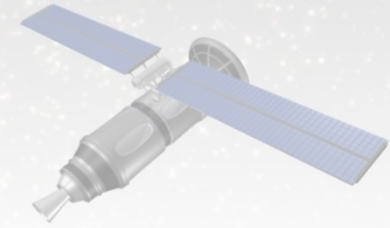
# ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES



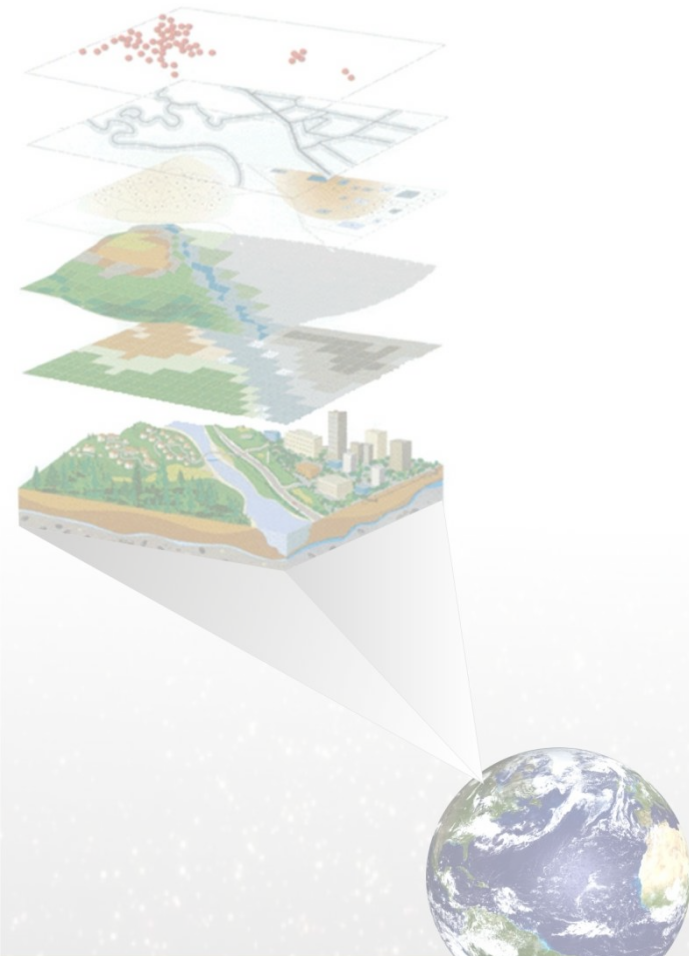
- Industrial Waste Pond Security
- Landform Stability
- Land Use Changes/Patterns/Impacts
- Land Use Intensification Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Land Use Rezoning Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Mine Tailing Pond Events/Impacts
- Misdemeanour Crime Incident Locations/Patterns/Impacts
- Natural Resource Extraction Rates
- Pandemic Origins/Spread Characteristics
- Pedestrians' Walk Sheds by City Zone
- Permafrost Changes/Impacts
- Plan Amendment Applications/Patterns/Impacts
- Precipitation Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Property Tax Rate Patterns
- Rainforest Contraction Patterns/Impacts
- Road Intersection Performance Indexes



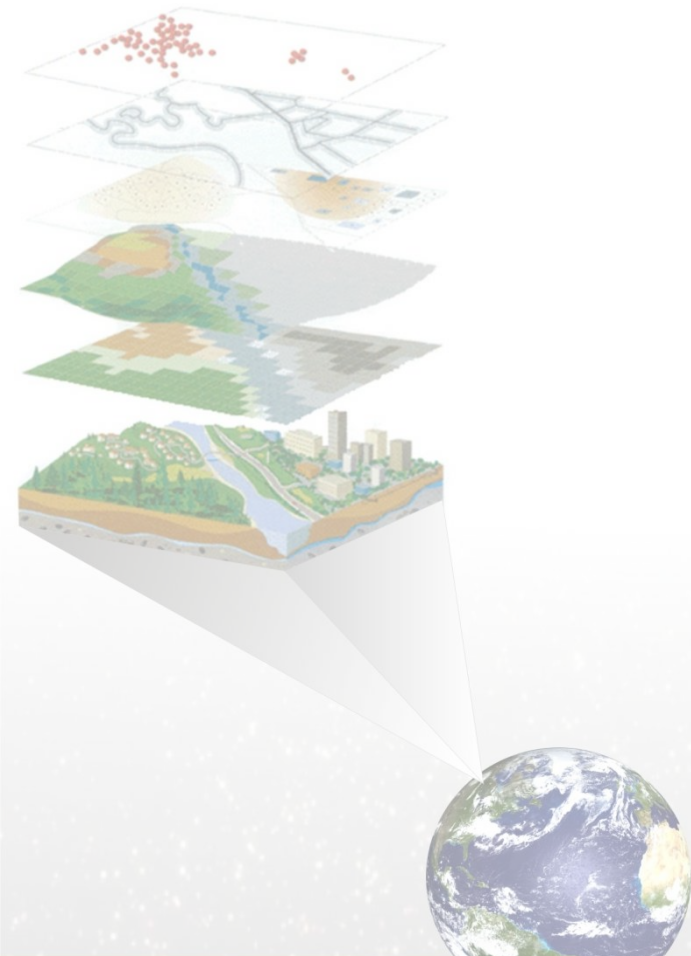
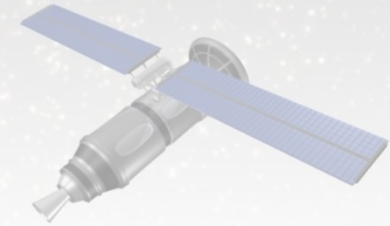
# ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES



- Road Network Expansion Activities/Patterns/Impacts
- School Zone Boundary Adjustments/Impacts
- Sensitive Lands Inventories
- Sidewalk Winter Maintenance Activities/Patterns/Impacts
- Soil Loss Causes/Impacts
- Solid Waste Collection Volumes/Patterns/Impacts
- Solid Waste Disposal Facilities/Sites
- Temperature Events/Patterns
- Toxic Waste Creation/Disposal Locations/Patterns/Impacts
- Tornado Events/Patterns/Impacts
- Traffic Congestion Rates/Patterns/Impacts
- Traffic Enforcement Citations
- Traffic Enforcement Deployment Activities/Patterns/Impacts
- Traffic Modal Split Shares/Patterns/Impacts

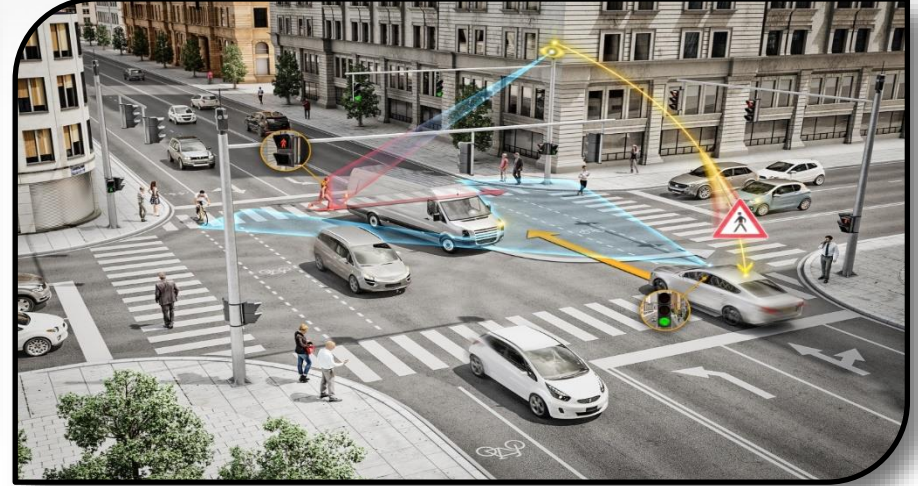
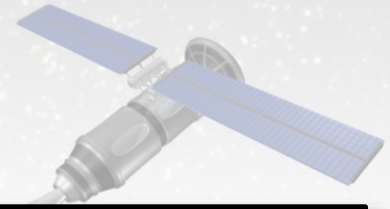


# ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES

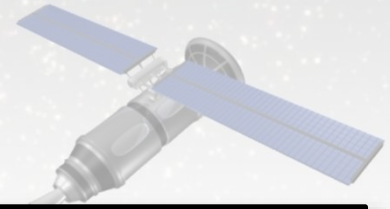


- Transit Ridership Loads/Patterns/Impacts
- Transit Route Networks/Loads
- Urban Density Patterns/Impacts
- Urban Sprawl Dimensions/Patterns/Impacts
- Vehicle Collisions/Locations/Patterns/impacts
- Violent Crime Incidents/Patterns/Impacts
- Voter Turnout Rates/Patterns/Impacts
- Walkability Measures/Indexes
- Walk Trip Volumes/Patterns/Impacts
- Water Consumption Rates/Patterns/Impacts
- Water Quality
- Watersheds
- Weather Events//Patterns/Impacts
- Wetland Boundary Changes/Patterns/Impacts
- Wildfire Locations
- Zoning Amendment Activities/Patterns/Impacts

# WHY CITIZENS HAVE A DEEP INTEREST IN MANY OF THE GEO-REALITIES IMBEDDED IN THE PREVIOUS SLIDES

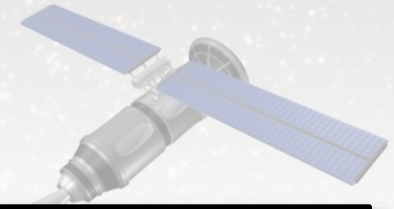


# WHY CITIZENS HAVE A DEEP INTEREST IN MANY OF THE GEO-REALITIES IMBEDDED IN THE PREVIOUS SLIDES



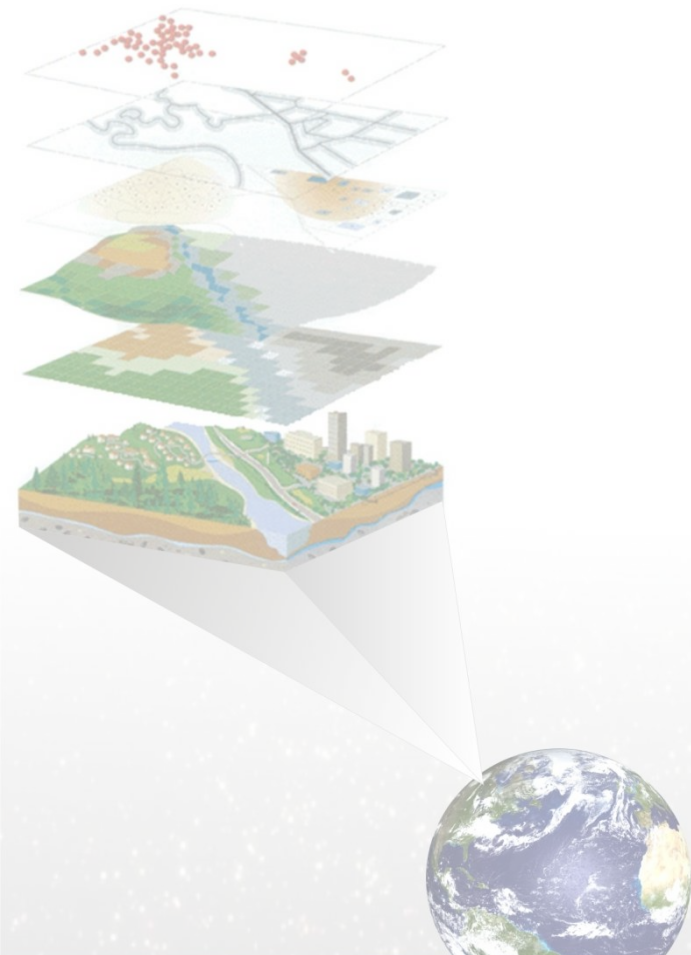
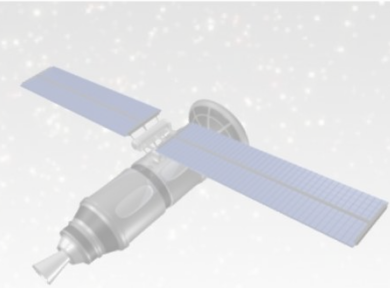
Slide 10

# WHY CITIZENS HAVE A DEEP INTEREST IN MANY OF THE GEO-REALITIES IMBEDDED IN THE PREVIOUS SLIDES



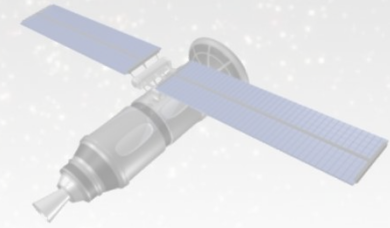
Slide 11

# **CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS: PROPOSITIONS OF A RESEARCH DESIGN LINKING CITIZENS and POLITICIANS THROUGH THE GEO-RECORDS CONNECTION**



- **Citizens care about what geo-records represent.**
- **Citizens care about the state and contents of geo-records representing matters of interest.**
- **Politicians care about the citizens (voters) who care about what geo-records represent.**
- **Politicians therefore care about the state and contents of geo-records representing matters of interest to citizens.**
- **Citizens and politicians therefore care about the state and contents of geo-records representing matters of interest to citizens.**
- **Citizens need access to geo-records in order to be sure that politicians' interest in geo-records serves the expectations of citizens.**
- **Citizens need to ensure that politicians provide citizens the quality of access necessary to ensure transparency, accountability, due diligence, etc., on the parts of politicians.**
- **That being the case, are geo-records the key to achieving better citizen access to public records?**

# CONVENTIONAL PUBLIC RECORDS CONTAINING GEO-DATA, GEO-INFORMATION, AND GEO-KNOWLEDGE



**GRAPHICS**

**IMAGES**

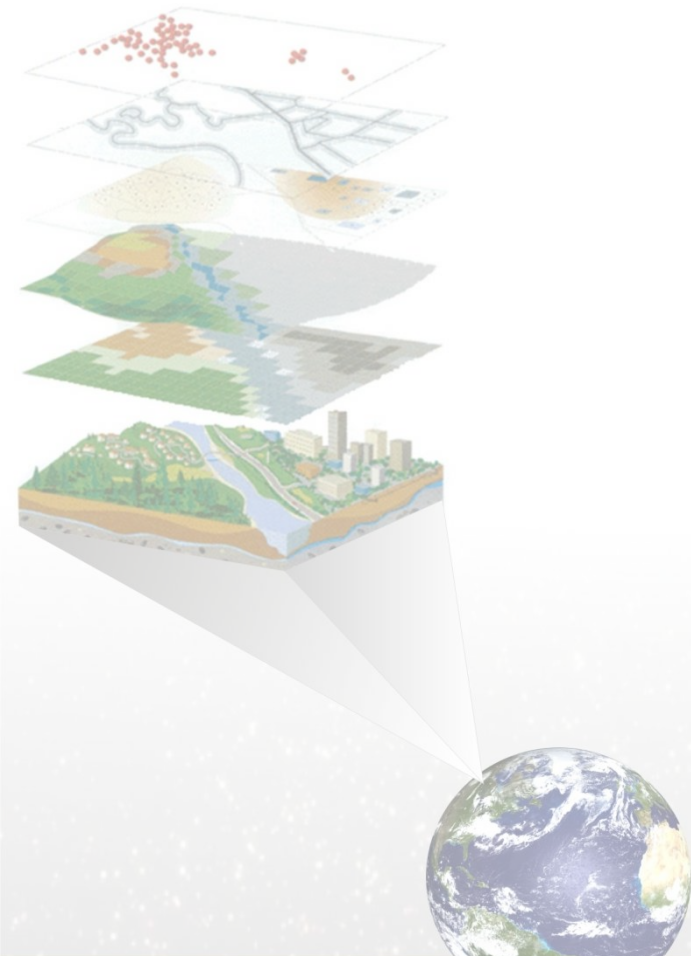
**MAPS**

**PHOTOS**

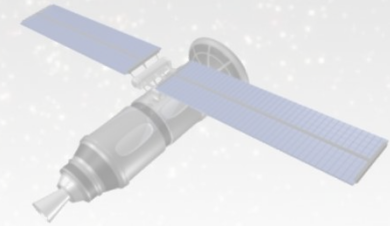
**SLIDES**

**TEXTS**

**VIDEOS**



# TYPES OF PUBLIC RECORDS CONTAINING GEO-DATA, GEO- INFORMATION, AND GEO-KNOWLEDGE WHICH ARE USED BY CITIZENS



**GRAPHICS**

**IMAGES**

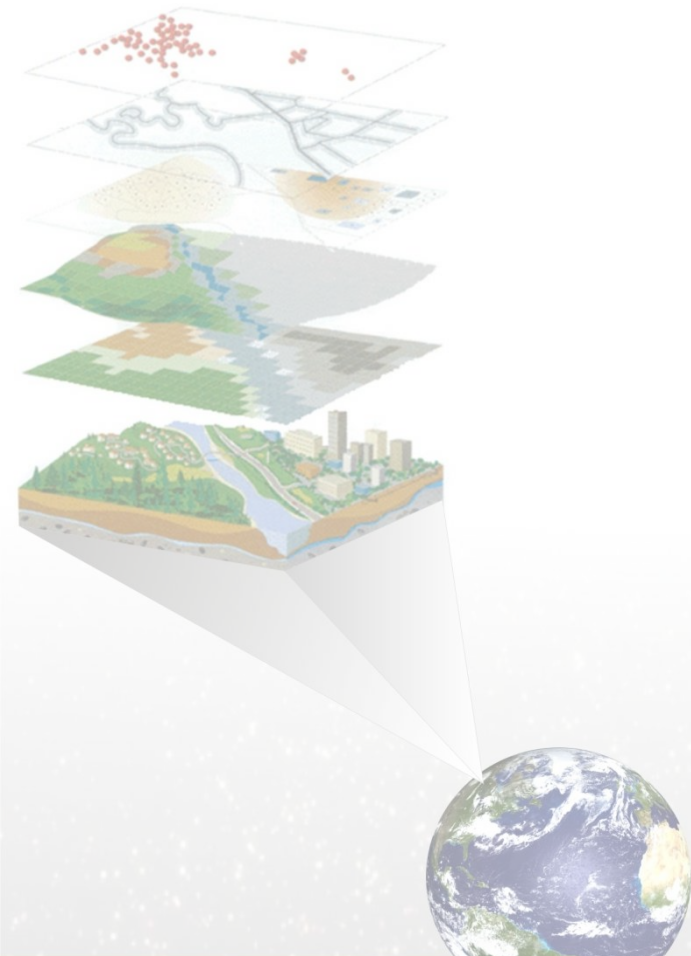
**MAPS**

**PHOTOS**

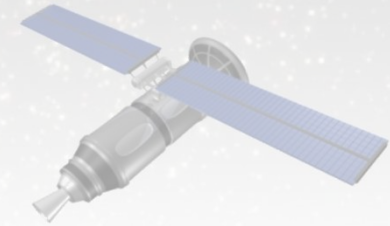
**SLIDES**

**TEXTS**

**VIDEOS**



# QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY POLITICIANS WHO VALUE CITIZENS HAVING BEST PRACTICES ACCESS TO PUBLIC GEO-RECORDS



As confirmed by the *Chronicling* pilot study project, many politicians treat transparency and accountability like they are mere buzzwords. Consequently, they are unlikely to agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records.

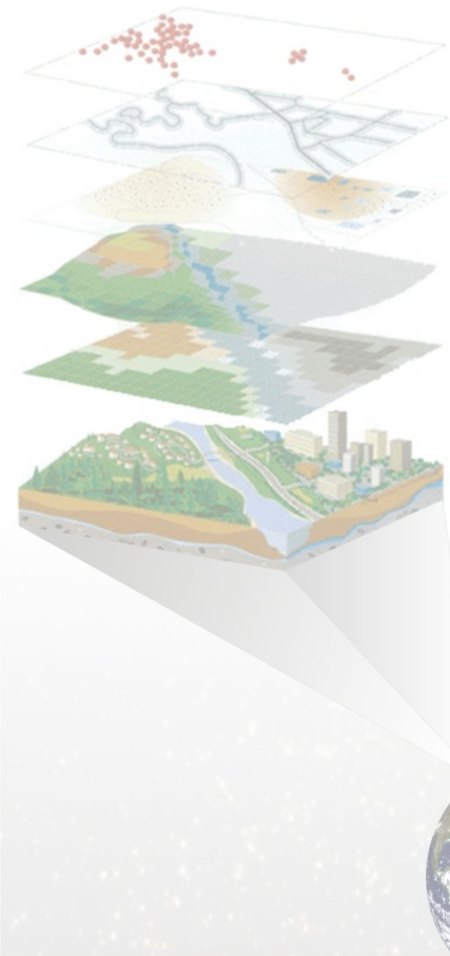
However, geo-records are a different order of business, and this difference points to a variation in research design which could have major implications for the *Chronicling* project.

That is, geo-records contain geo-data, geo-information, and geo-knowledge elements and items on thousands of topics which describe the state of peoples' well-being – mental, physical, emotional, social, financial, economic, etc., – as well as the state of the built and natural environments in which people exist.

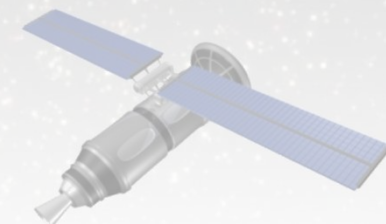
Bearing in mind, therefore, that as a rule politicians want to be on 'the good side' of a sufficient numbers of voters to get elected, or re-elected as the case may be, they tend to support what their voters want, such as, perhaps, better access to geo-records.

And, of course, there are politicians who respect the principles of good governance, and they could view free, easy, timely, and direct online access to geo-records to fall within the purview of good governance.

It therefore appears clear that this avenue is most worthy of further consideration, beginning with the next several slides.



# A SAMPLER OF QUESTIONS WHICH PROBE POLITICIANS' ENGAGEMENT WITH GEO-RECORDS, AND THEIR LINKS TO CITIZENS THROUGH USE OF AND ACCESS TO GEO-RECORDS



Adding a geo-records component to the chronicling pilot study is in the early design stage. The following questions are indicative of those under consideration for conversation purposes.

What percentage of communications from constituents is digital?

What percentage of your public meetings uses geo-records?

What are examples of geo-records that are used?

What percentage of your communications to constituents uses geo-records?

What are examples of geo-records that you use?

What percentage of your communications with constituents involves geo-records?

How many FOI applications have you filed?

How many times have you told a constituent to file an FOI application in order to access public records?

How many times have you assisted a constituent file an FOI application?

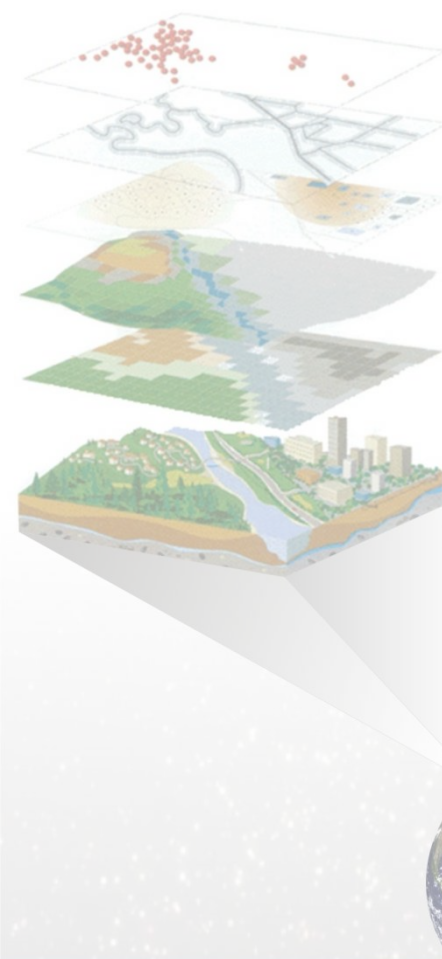
How many times have you been asked by a constituent to assist her/him gain access to public geo-records?

How many public meetings have you arranged with constituents to discuss issues involving access to public records?

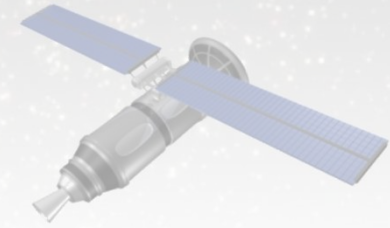
How many public meetings have you arranged with constituents to discuss issues involving access to public geo-records?

How many hardcopy newsletters have you sent to constituents asking if they wish to have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?

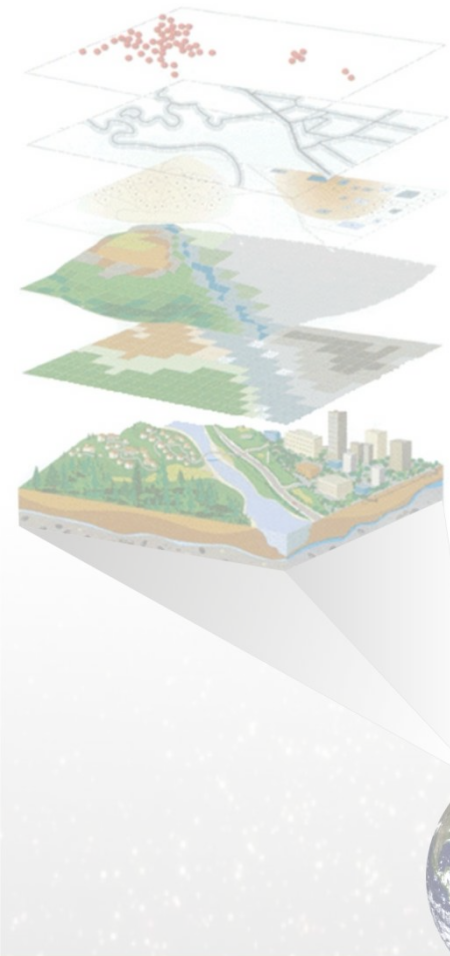
How many e-newsletters have you sent to constituents asking if they wish to have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public geo-records?



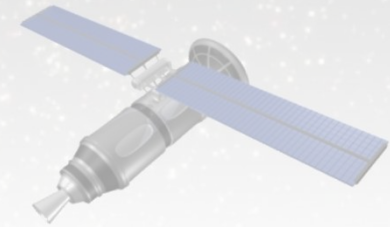
# **CITIZENS' MUST INSTRUCT POLITICIANS AND APPOINTED STAFF ABOUT CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GEO-RECORDS**



**It has already been ascertained that for a number of municipal, provincial, and federal politicians the terms transparency and accountability are mere buzzwords, even though they are generally seen as paramount among the principles underlying good governance in a free and democratic society. A pertinent lesson learned from the pilot study thus far is that citizens need to spell out in certain terms their instructions about citizens' access to public geo-records. Two instructions set the tone.**



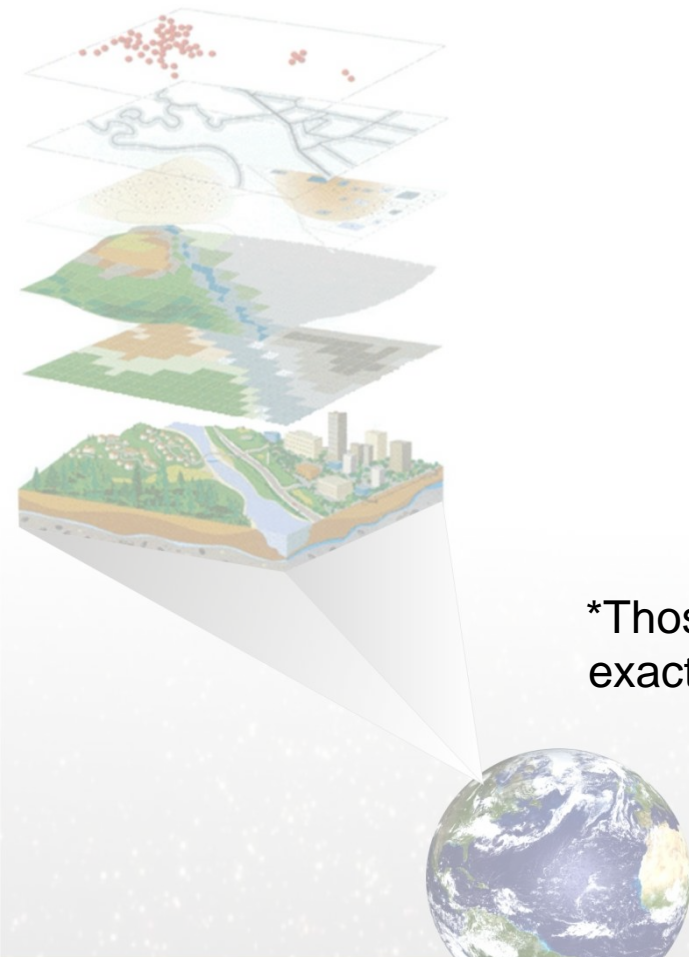
# CITIZENS ARE THE OWNERS OF PUBLIC RECORDS, AND EXPECT THE BEST LEVEL OF ACCESS ACHIEVABLE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEIR ASSET\*



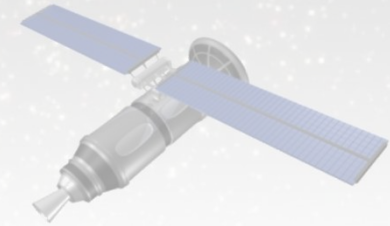
At minimum, this means that politicians and staff ensure that citizens have

**free  
easy  
timely  
direct  
online access to  
geo-data records,  
geo-information records, and  
geo-knowledge records**

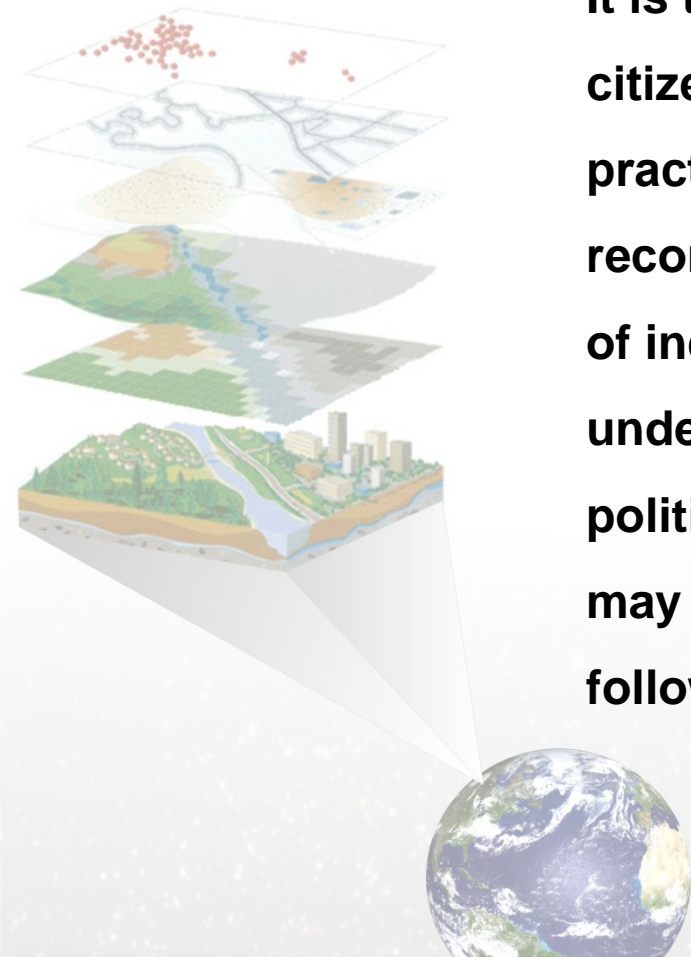
\*Those who have bank accounts or investment funds know exactly what I am talking about when it comes to access to records involving our personal assets.



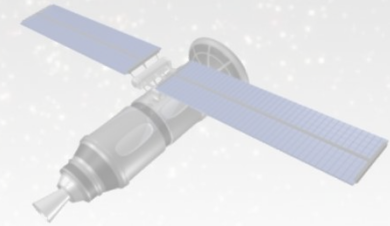
# CITIZENS SPECIFY WHAT IS MEANT BY “BEST PRACTICES”



**It is the task of politicians and staff to ascertain what citizens in their jurisdictions mean by “best practices” as they apply to citizens’ access to geo-records. There are many ways to undertake this line of inquiry, and it is reasonable to expect that the undertaking will be informative for citizens, politicians, and staff. The Chronicling pilot study may be instructive in that regard, as noted in the following slides.**



# PILOT STUDY INTERIM REPORT 2 AS A GUIDE FOR A SURVEY OF POLITICIANS ON ACCESS TO GEO-RECORDS

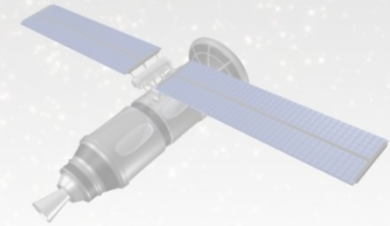


## Interim Report 2. Responses of City of Ottawa Mayor and Councillors to the Question: Do You Agree that Citizens Are Entitled to Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to the Public Records Held by the City of Ottawa?

**COMMENT:** The survey methodology used for interim report 2 was found to be sound. Using it with a geo-records focus would sharpen the distinction between politicians who agree and those who do not agree to provide citizens the quality of access necessary to obtain answers to questions about the kinds of matters identified in slides titled, **ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES.**

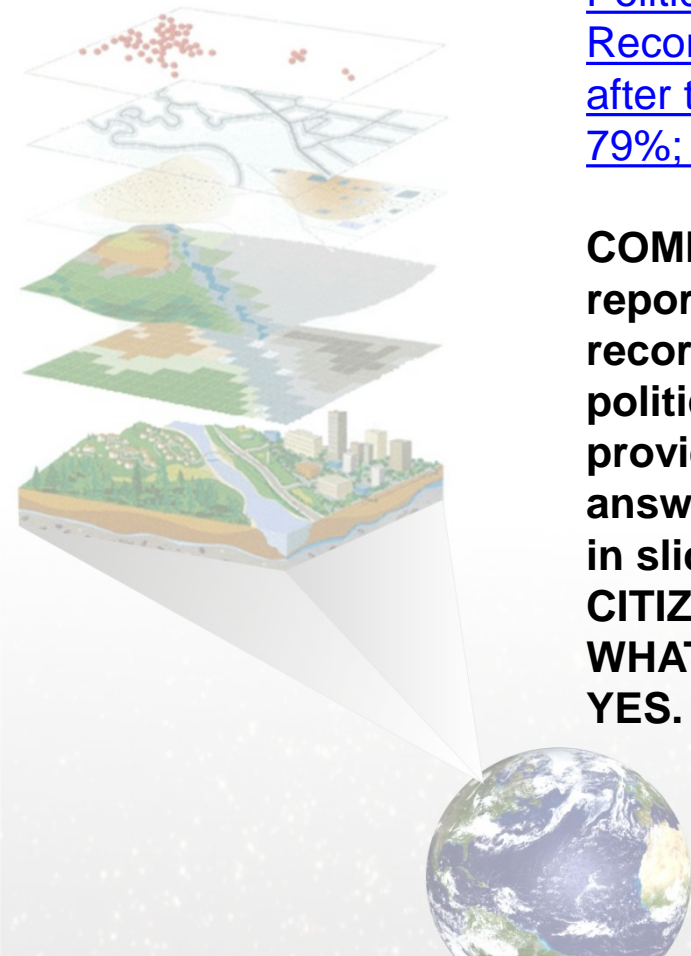


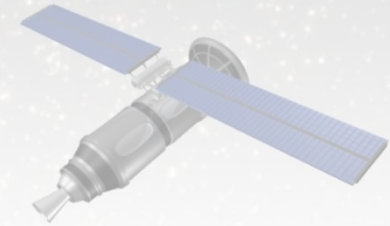
# PILOT STUDY INTERIM REPORT 9 AS A GUIDE FOR A SURVEY OF POLITICIANS ON ACCESS TO GEO-RECORDS



[Interim Report 9. Using Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice: Ottawa Council Rating after the Second Citizen Access Survey–Political Buzzwords, 79%; Drivers, 21%](#)

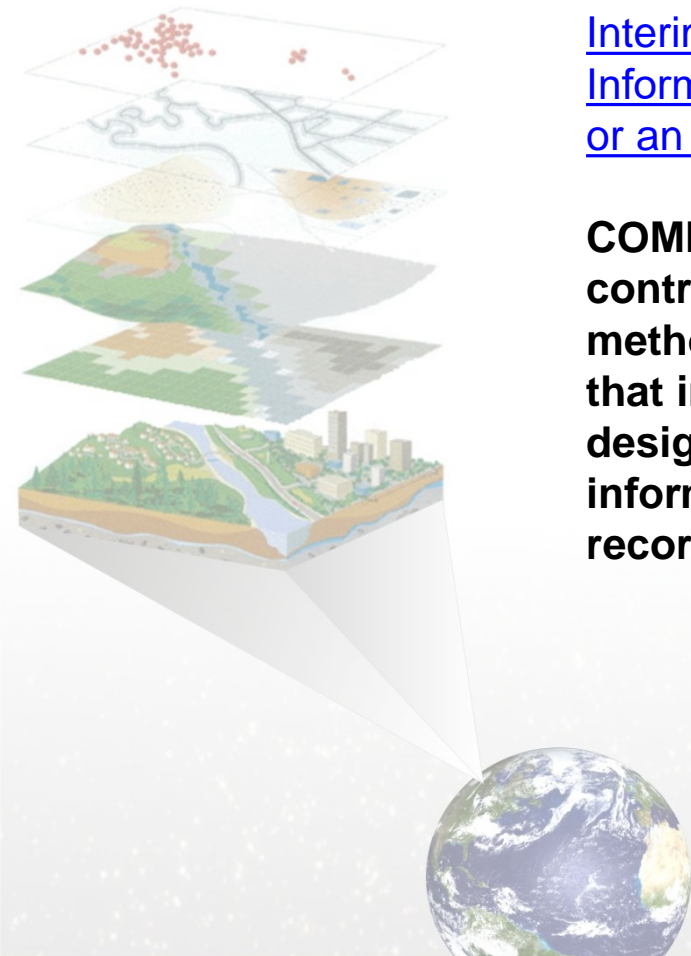
**COMMENT:** The survey methodology used for interim report 9 was found to be sound. Using it again with a geo-records focus would sharpen the distinction between politicians who agree and those who do not agree to provide citizens the quality of access necessary to obtain answers to questions about the kinds of matters identified in slides titled, ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES.



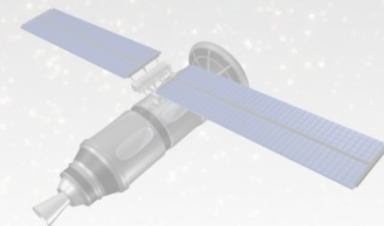


## [Interim Report 14. Asking the Question: Is Freedom of Information Legislation a Citizens' Conduit to Public Records, or an Institutional Barrier to Public Records?](#)

**COMMENT:** In the absence of any comments to the contrary, interim report 14 is deemed to be methodologically sound. It therefore seems highly likely that interim report 14 is an instructive model for research design purposes to examine the question, Is freedom of information legislation a citizens' conduit to public geo-records, or an institutional barrier to public geo-records?



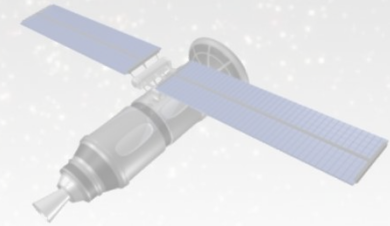
# PILOT STUDY INTERIM REPORT 15 AS A GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING TACTICS BY POLITICIANS TO RESTRICT CITIZENS' ACCESS TO GEO-RECORDS



## [Interim Report 15. Identifying Tactics Used By Politicians to Restrict Citizens' Access to Public Records](#)

**COMMENT:** The methodology used for interim report 15 was found to be sound. It therefore seems highly likely that interim report 15 is an instructive model for a report that identifies the tactics used by politicians to restrict citizens' access to public geo-records.



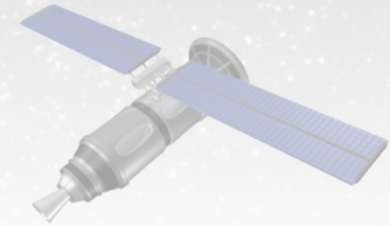


[Interim Report 18. Invoking the Code of Conduct to Publicly Oblige City of Ottawa Politicians to Demonstrate Due Regard for Transparency and Accountability](#)

**COMMENT:** The methodology used for interim report 18 was found to be sound. It therefore seems highly likely that interim report 15 is an instructive model for a report that discusses how the terms of a code of conduct oblige politicians to satisfy conditions of transparency and accountability in decisions affecting citizens' access to public geo-records.

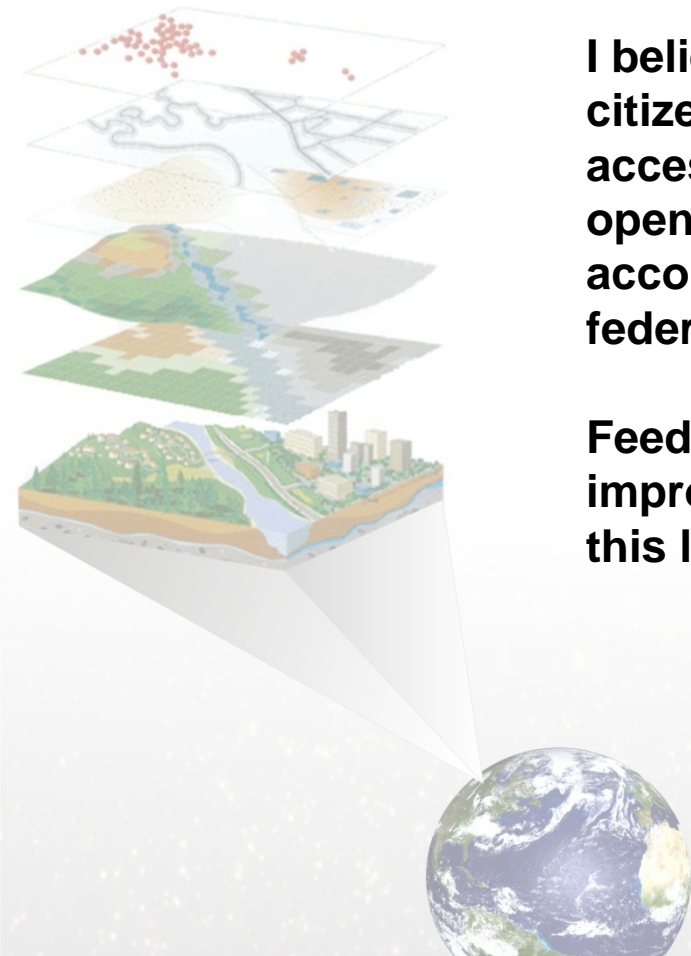


# CLOSING THOUGHTS ABOUT ADDING GEO-RECORDS TO THE PILOT STUDY ON BEST PRACTICES FOR CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS (1)

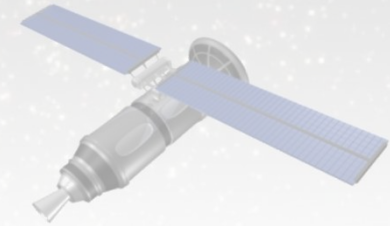


**I believe that a survey question asking politicians about citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to geo-records could be the question which opens the door to increased transparency and accountability on the parts of municipal, provincial and federal politicians.**

**Feedback from politicians friendly to the idea of improved citizen access to all public records supports this line of thought.**



# **CLOSING THOUGHTS ABOUT ADDING GEO-RECORDS TO THE PILOT STUDY ON BEST PRACTICES FOR CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS (2)**

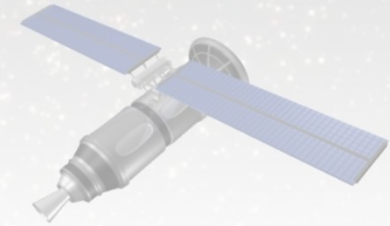


**Feedback from politicians friendly to the idea of improved citizen access to all public records suggests that the geo-records approach could be very effective, and especially if the surveys involve community associations and other citizen-based organizations, because that is where the votes are.**

**The entries in the slides titled, ARE GEO-RECORDS THE KEY TO BETTER CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS? BASED ON WHAT THEY REPRESENT, THERE ARE REASONS TO SAY YES, are seen as indicative of the kinds of topics, issues, concerns, problems, opportunities, challenges, etc., that citizens can identify as important to them and, by extension, important to the politicians and government staff who are employed by citizens.**



# CLOSING THOUGHTS ABOUT ADDING GEO-RECORDS TO THE PILOT STUDY ON BEST PRACTICES FOR CITIZEN ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS (3)



**Third, regarding next steps, this presentation is background for “Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens’ Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments”, which is the lead document for the session, Best Practice Standards for Citizens’ Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments, 2023 GIS-Pro Conference, Columbus, Ohio, October 16-19.**

**The GIS-Pro 2023 document and PowerPoint slides will be posted pre-conference at <http://wellar.ca/informationresearch/Publications.htm> and other sites.**

