

*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*

**Interim Report 11.  
Using Transparency and Accountability  
as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers  
Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada Is  
Best Practice: Federal Cabinet Score after  
Second Survey -- Political Buzzwords, 100%;  
Drivers, 0%**

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## **A. Context**

The first phase of reports (1-7) are published, and we are now into phase two reports for the project, *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*.

Report titles to date and their links are:

- [\*\*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\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 1. Using Interim Reports as Part of the Pilot Study Research Design\*\*](#)
- [\*\*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?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 3. Using Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada Is Best Practice, Ottawa Council Score: Political Buzzwords, 87.5%; Drivers, 12.5%\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 4. Responses of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Selected Cabinet Ministers, and MP Arya Chandra \(Lib.- Nepean\) 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 Government of Canada?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 5. Using Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice, Federal Cabinet Score: Political Buzzwords, 100%; Drivers, 0%\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 6. Responses of Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Selected Cabinet Ministers to the Question: Do You Agree that Citizens Are Entitled to Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to the Public Records Held by Municipal Governments in Ontario?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Interim Report 7. Using Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice, Ontario Cabinet Score: Political Buzzwords, 100%; Drivers, 0%\*\*](#)

- [Interim Report 8. Second Survey Asking City of Ottawa Mayor and Councillors, 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?](#)
- [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%](#)
- [Interim Report 10. Second Survey Asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Selected Cabinet Ministers, and MP Arya Chandra \(Lib.- Nepean\): Do You Agree that Citizens are Entitled to Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to the Public Records Held by the Government of Canada?](#)

Interim reports 8-13 discuss the results of the second round of surveys, and provide a basis for designing a template to monitor and analyse responses of municipal, provincial, and federal politicians to questions about citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records.

The precedent report for interim report 11 is interim report 5, and the tool for comparative recording and analysis purposes is Table 1 which is introduced in interim report 2.

Interim report 10 contains the second survey results from asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, selected cabinet ministers and several Liberal MPs, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?* The results of survey two are the basis of interim report 11.

While our focus in the pilot study is currently on MPs from the Liberal Party since they form the current government, this research is applicable to all federal MPs.

The general applicability condition holds because it is highly likely that all federal MPs use the terms transparency and accountability, and because they are representatives of citizens when it comes to federal politicians deciding whether citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada.

**(NOTE. It is possible, unbeknownst to me, that one or more of the surveyed federal politicians has publicly proclaimed that he or she has no regard, limited regard, qualified regard, or something other than utmost regard for transparency and accountability. Upon being advised in that regard by a published, public record, I will tailor future comments to ensure accurate representation of any**

**politicians who are not fully in favour of transparency or accountability in their practice of governance.)**

The research hypothesis (RH) underlying the pilot study methodology is two-fold in nature, and is outlined as follows:

**RH1:** Politicians who say yes to the survey question have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms serve as drivers for ensuring that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

**RH2:** Politicians who do not say yes to the survey question do not have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms as political buzzwords reveal them as politicians who restrict citizens' access to public records.

It is appropriate to again note that we are fully aware of the irony involved in asking politicians about citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records, and then witnessing politicians engage in evasive moves to avoid answering, even while proclaiming their deep regard for transparency and accountability.

And, we are aware that it may be easier to teach feral cats to line dance than to obtain straightforward responses from politicians in an easy, timely, and direct manner.

However, this game is certainly worth the candle, and the mixed message tactic of some politicians will be pursued throughout the pilot study, and names will continue to be named.

As suggested by reviewers, it may become increasingly necessary to sharpen the comments about avoidance-type responses to the survey question.

In Section B the results of the second survey are recalled, and federal politicians are rated for their use of transparency and accountability as political buzzwords, and as drivers ensuring access to public records in Canada is best practice.

## **B. Results of the Second Survey Asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and selected Cabinet Ministers and MPs, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct Online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?***

By way of brief background, the same materials used in the first survey are used in the second survey, so methodology issues do not arise concerning consistency and comparability.

The only added communication is an email which makes specific reference to the terms transparency and accountability. The email is repeated here for reader convenience.

Email 1 regarding survey two was sent to Prime Minister Trudeau, and to cabinet ministers and MPs who had received survey one.

### **Email 1 -----**

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 9, 2019 7:43 PM  
**To:** justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca  
**Subject:** Access to Public Records Survey 2 Trudeau

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

This is a follow-on survey to the first survey on **Access to Public Records** in which you and a selection of ministers and MP Chandra Arya are asked “*Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?*”

At the risk of making too fine a point, the words “you” and “your” appear in fourteen (14) places in the original email. They continue to pertain to the question asked, and are underlined and bolded here for double emphasis: “*Do **you** agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?*”

Links to the interim reports containing the results of the first federal survey are included here for your information and convenience:

[\*\*Interim Report 4. Responses of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Selected Cabinet Ministers, and MP Arya Chandra \(Lib.- Nepean\) 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 Government of Canada?\*\*](#)

**Interim Report 5. Using Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring Access to Public Records in Canada is Best Practice, Federal Cabinet Score: Political Buzzwords, 100%; Drivers, 0%**

For the second survey, the primary question remains the same: *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?*

I look forward to receiving your YES or NO response for the second survey regarding Access to Public Records.

In the spirit of research involving transparency and accountability, if a YES response is not received by April 26, 2019, then it will be taken that you do not agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely and direct online access to public records held by the Government of Canada.

It is emphasized that rather than make a decision by inference, a clear-cut YES or NO response is preferred in the interests of both transparency and accountability. This methodology matter is discussed in previous interim reports.

As you may appreciate, time constraints dictate that we move expeditiously, and it appears fair to say that a sufficient number of working days (12) are provided to deal with an inquiry that should not take more than 10 minutes of considered thought in order to arrive at a reasoned position.

Again, the disposition of your response or lack thereof to the first survey can be found in interim reports 4 and 5 above.

Sincerely

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The two adjustments made to the survey process are important pilot study design changes, and bear repeating.

1. A stated due date for responses has been added; this change is consistent with what politicians do to citizens, so it should fit into their current practice of insisting upon responses from citizens in a timely manner.
2. All responses are assigned to either the YES category for YES or AGREE or other affirmative responses, or to the NO category for any other disposition of the survey email, including non-responses, non-yes responses, and passing the survey off to a member of staff.

**Table 1. Scorecard of Responses by Selected Members of Cabinet and Liberal MPs, Government of Canada, to the Second Survey Asking the Question: *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?***

<u>Contacted Federal Politician</u>	<u>Response</u>
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.....	NO
Minister Bardish Chagger.....	NO
Minister François-Philippe Champagne.....	NO
Minister Kirsty Duncan.....	NO
Minister Marc Garneau.....	NO
Minister Karina Gould.....	NO
Minister David Lametti .....	NO
Minister Catherine McKenna.....	NO
Minister Joyce Murray.....	NO
Minister Carla Qualtrough.....	NO
Minister Amarjeet Sohi.....	NO
Minister Jonathan Wilkinson.....	NO
MP Chandra Arya.....	NO
MP Jane Philpott.....	NO
MP Jody Wilson-Raybould.....	NO

The scorecard for the second survey shows that no contacted federal Liberal politician responded in the affirmative, namely, that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada.

However, and this is the however that some readers may have expected, I did receive a detailed communication from Joyce Murray, President of Treasury Board, and Minister, Digital Government.

As the reader may recall, the initial communication to the prime minister and ministers uses the pronouns “you” and “your” fourteen (14) times. The intent is to ascertain if any MPs who freely use the terms transparency and accountability will speak freely when asked the question, Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?

A total of fifteen (15) federal Liberal MPs are contacted in the second survey, and no MP responded with a Yes in response to the question, **bolding and underline added for emphasis**, Do **you** agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?

In the next section I discuss the matter of ministers and MPs referring the question, “Do **you** agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?” to the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government.

### **C. Referrals by Cabinet Ministers to the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government**

Several thoughts come to mind upon seeing that an inquiry to a minister or MP is referred to the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government for a response, even though “you” and “your” pronouns appear fourteen (14) times in the survey communication.

First, are ministers and MPs so hamstrung by party loyalty, cabinet solidarity, etc., that they cannot respond directly and candidly for themselves to a question which involves a defining feature of a free and democratic society?

Second, could it be that ministers and MPs have no clue about the citizen access issue, and are looking to the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government to provide an informed answer for them?

Third, does the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government wonder “Whatever are they thinking, to forward the inquiry to me?”

Fourth, does the President of Treasury Board/Minister of Digital Government wonder “Have any my colleagues ever thought about how it looks for her or him to claim that she or he is all for transparency and accountability, and in the same breath not agreeing that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada so that they can examine our performance in regard to things done and not done?”



It may be appropriate to return to the deferral theme in a future interim report, since federal cabinet ministers are not the only politicians using the referral ‘tactic’.

## **D. Analysis of the Results of the Second Survey Asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Selected Cabinet Ministers and MPs, Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada?**

The two research hypotheses are the bases of analysis at this stage in the pilot study.

Regarding **RH1**. Politicians who say yes to the survey question have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms serve as drivers for ensuring that access to public records in Canada is best practice. There are zero Yes responses from the surveyed federal Liberal politicians to the survey question.

Consequently, the logic of RH1 is that none of the surveyed federal Liberal politicians has due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms are not drivers for ensuring that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Rather, these politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as political buzzwords.

At this stage in the pilot study, therefore, and drawing on a concept developed in interim report 9, the surveys did not identify any “Truthers” among the federal Liberal survey group.

To briefly recall the Truther concept, a Truther in this survey is a federal politician who is deemed to be telling the truth about her or his regard for transparency and accountability because he or she agrees to citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to Government of Canada records, which report on the actions and non-actions of federal politicians.

As noted in previous interim reports, the RH1 analysis is at a preliminary level, since findings are based on surveys and not detailed interviews. That said, obtaining information about politicians’ standing on the matters of transparency, accountability, and citizens’ access to public records needs to start somewhere, which appears to be in this pilot study.

Regarding **RH2**. Politicians who do not say yes to the survey question do not have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms as political buzzwords reveal them as politicians who restrict citizens' access to public records. This research hypothesis accounts for all the contacted federal Liberal politicians in the two surveys.

With regard to RH2, then, and at a preliminary level since these findings are based on survey two and not detailed interviews, PM Justin Trudeau, Ministers Bardish Chagger, François-Philippe Champagne, Kirsty Duncan, Marc Garneau, Karina Gould, David Lametti, Catherine McKenna, Joyce Murray, Carla Qualtrough, Amarjeet Sohi, and Jonathan Wilkinson, as well as MPs Chandra Arya, Jane Philpott and Jody Wilson-Raybould, provide a basis for accepting RH2.

Or, to re-phrase, since none of the contacted federal Liberal politicians agrees that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the Government of Canada, these politicians fail a fundamental test of being true to the principles of transparency and accountability.

That is, based on the thesis that there is a direct, interdependent relationship between transparency and accountability on the one hand and citizen access to public records on the other, failure to accept that citizens are entitled free, easy, timely, and direct online access to Government of Canada public records puts the lie to claims to have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability.

The bottom line of the analysis of results of the second survey is that:

- 100% of the contacted federal Liberal politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as political buzzwords;
- 0% of the contacted federal Liberal politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as drivers for ensuring that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Several words come to mind to describe federal politicians who embrace transparency and accountability, while not agreeing that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to Government of Canada public records.

However, since this issue is much more than a casual exercise in labelling, it is the topic of a separate interim report to be published upon completion of the reports on responses of federal and provincial politicians to the second survey.

## **D. Analysis Implications**

In general the analysis implications presented in interim report 5 are pertinent here, and nothing presented in interim report 11 is contrary to materials in interim report 5.

The additional analysis feature is the introduction of the two research hypotheses:

**RH1:** Politicians who say yes to the survey question have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms serve as drivers for ensuring that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

**RH2:** Politicians who do not say yes to the survey question do not have due regard for the principles of transparency and accountability, and their use of the terms as political buzzwords reveal them as politicians who restrict citizens' access to public records.

In addition to formally expressing the core relationships of the pilot study, research hypotheses **RH1** and **RH2** are the bases for articulating statistical hypotheses should this pilot study or a variation thereof proceed in that direction.

## **E. Conclusion**

In survey one and survey two, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Ministers Bardish Chagger, François-Philippe Champagne, Kirsty Duncan, Marc Garneau, Karina Gould, David Lametti, Catherine McKenna, Joyce Murray Carla Qualtrough, Amarjeet Sohi, and Jonathan Wilkinson, as well as MPs Chandra Arya, Jane Philpott and Jody Wilson-Raybould do not agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records.

It therefore follows from the design of the survey methodology that the terms transparency and accountability are used by them as political buzzwords and, as a consequence, none of these federal Liberal politicians is a credible authority for using transparency and accountability as drivers to ensure that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Based on the experience to date, the survey instrument and its full binary approach are working as intended. That is, if politicians do not respond in the affirmative 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 Government of Canada?, then any other response or non-response is assigned to the No category.

This approach decisively identifies politicians who are “Truthers” and politicians who are not “Truthers”. As noted above, the jury is still out on how to best characterize politicians who are not “Truthers”.

Finally, no challenges of any kind have been raised about the survey instrument, its use, or the interpretation of recordings.