

*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 13.
**Using Transparency and Accountability as
Political Buzzwords, and as Drivers Ensuring
Access to Public Records in Canada is Best
Practice, Ontario Cabinet Score, Second Survey:
Political Buzzwords, 100%; Drivers, 0%**

Barry Wellar

Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa
President, Information Research Board Inc.

wellar.barry@gmail.com

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

August 23, 2019

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 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%](#)
- [Interim Report 12. Second Survey of Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Selected Cabinet Ministers: 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 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 13 is interim report 7, and the tool for comparative recording and analysis purposes is Table 1 which is introduced in interim report 2. Interim report 13 contains the second survey results from asking Ontario Premier Doug Ford and selected cabinet ministers, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by held by municipal governments in Ontario?* The results of survey two are the basis of interim report 13.

While our focus in the pilot study is currently on MPPs from the Conservative Party since they form the current Government of Ontario, this research is applicable to all provincial MPPs.

The general applicability condition holds because it is highly likely that all provincial MPPs use the terms transparency and accountability, and because they are

representatives of citizens when it comes to provincial politicians deciding whether citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by municipal governments in Ontario.

(NOTE. It is possible, unbeknownst to me, that one or more of the surveyed provincial 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 respect 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 provincial politicians who members of the Ontario Conservative Party 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 Premier Doug Ford and Selected Cabinet Ministers, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by held by municipal governments in Ontario?*

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. In the interests of space, only the email to Premier Ford is presented.

The email to Premier Ford regarding the second survey sent May 3 follows.

From: Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, May 3, 2019 10:19 AM

To: doug.ford@pc.ola.org

Subject: ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS, SURVEY 2 D FORD

Dear Premier Ford

This is a follow-on survey to the first survey on **Access to Public Records**, in which you and a selection of ministers are asked,

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?

At the risk of making too fine a point, I wish to emphasize that the words “you” and “your” appear in fourteen (14) places in the original email of December 19, 2018.

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 municipal governments in Ontario?

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

- [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%](#)

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 municipal governments in Ontario?*

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, and with due regard for timeliness on behalf of citizens who have a vested interest in this matter, if a YES response is not received by **May 17, 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 municipal governments in Ontario.

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 interim reports.

Again, the disposition of your response or lack thereof to the first survey can be found in Interim Reports 6 and 7 above.

Sincerely

Barry Wellar

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M, GISP
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa
President, Information Research Board Inc.
133 Ridgefield Crescent

Nepean, ON K2H 6T4
CANADA
<http://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

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 Yes or No Responses by Selected Members of Cabinet, Government of Ontario: 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?

<u>Member of Cabinet</u>	<u>Response</u>
Premier Doug Ford.....	NO
Minister Steve Clark.....	NO
Minister Susan Elliott.....	NO
Minister Vic Fedeli.....	NO
Minister Sylvia Jones.....	NO
Minister Lisa MacLeod.....	NO
Minister Monte McNaughton.....	NO
Minister Caroline Mulroney.....	NO
Minister Rod Phillips.....	NO
Minister Bill Walker.....	NO
Minister Jeff Yurek.....	NO

The scorecard for the second survey shows that no contacted provincial Conservative politician responded in the affirmative, namely, that citizens are entitled are entitled to free, easy, timely and direct online access to public records held by municipal governments in Ontario.

C. Analysis of the Results of the Second Survey Asking Premier Doug Ford and Selected Cabinet Ministers, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by held by municipal governments in Ontario?*

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 provincial Conservative politicians to the survey question.

Consequently, the logic of RH1 is that none of the surveyed provincial Conservative 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 Ontario provincial Conservative politicians survey group.

To briefly recall the Truther concept, a Truther in this survey is a provincial Conservative 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 municipal government records which report on the actions and non-actions of all 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 provincial Conservative 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, Premier Doug Ford and Cabinet Ministers Steve Clark, Susan Elliott, Vic Fedeli, Sylvia Jones, Lisa MacLeod, Monte McNaughton, Caroline Mulroney, Rod Phillips, Bill Walker and Jeff Yurek provide a basis for accepting RH2.

Or, to re-phrase, since none of the contacted provincial Conservative politicians agrees that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by municipal governments in Ontario, 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 public records held by municipal governments in Ontario 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 provincial Conservative politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as political buzzwords; and,
- 0% of the contacted provincial Conservative 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 Ontario provincial federal politicians who embrace transparency and accountability, while not agreeing that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records held by municipal governments in Ontario.

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 municipal, federal, and provincial politicians to the second survey.

D. Analysis Implications

In general the analysis implications presented in interim report 7 are pertinent here, and nothing presented in interim report 13 is contrary to materials in interim report 7.

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, Premier Doug Ford and Cabinet Ministers Steve Clark, Susan Elliott, Vic Fedeli, Sylvia Jones, Lisa MacLeod, Monte McNaughton, Caroline Mulroney, Rod Phillips, Bill Walker and Jeff Yurek do not agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records held by municipal governments in Ontario.

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 provincial, Conservative 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 held by municipal governments in Ontario?*, 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.