

Analysis and Implications of Survey #1, City of Ottawa Mayor and Councillors, 2022-2026: 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?

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*Interim Report 23, Research Project Chronicling the Use
of Transparency and Accountability as Political Buzzwords,
or as Drivers Ensuring the Standard of Access to Public
Records in Canada Is Best Practice*

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A. Background

Interim Report 22 overviewed the results of administering survey #1 to the 2022-2026 City of Ottawa council in which members were asked,

Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?

[\(Interim Report 22. City of Ottawa Mayor and Councillors, 2022-2026: Do You Agree that Citizens Are Entitled to Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to the Public Records Held by the City of Ottawa? Survey #1\)](#)

The same survey question had been asked three times of the 2018-2022 council, and the reports on those surveys are backdrop for surveys of the 2022-2026 council which was sworn in on November 15, 2022.

Interim Report 23 analyzes the results from survey #1 of the 2022-2026 council, and discusses the implications of survey results for citizens being accorded free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records.

Before proceeding to analysis of the results from survey #1 of the 2022-2026 council, it is appropriate to confirm the validity of the survey instrument used in this research. The test results come from administering the survey question three times to the 2018-2022 council.

By way of brief comment on this matter, validity testing is part of methodologically designed research protocols. And, that principle is especially significant in research undertakings such as this one, because this survey research broke new ground by asking members of the 2018-2022 Ottawa council,

Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?

B. Means to Evaluate How Well the Survey Question Measures City of Ottawa Politicians' Regard for Citizens' Access to City of Ottawa Records

I have been unable to locate any studies which robustly measure City of Ottawa politicians' regard for the quality of access citizens' have to City of Ottawa public records. (1)

What I have encountered are countless comments by politicians of all stripes about the need for transparency and accountability of politicians, but no study-based reports on

what City of Ottawa politicians have done to ensure that transparency and accountability occur, or how any of these politicians have met their transparency and accountability obligations. **(2)**

Consequently, I do not have any baseline research against which to evaluate the efficacy of the survey question as a means to measure the regard each member of council and council as a group hold for citizens' access to City of Ottawa public records.

However, because of research design decisions, we have two bodies of data which can be applied to the 2018-2022 council and used in combination to:

- 1) Make a substantive evaluation of the efficacy of the survey question; and
- 2) Provide a substantive rationale for using the 2018-2022 council performance methodology as a model for the analysis and implications comments about the 2022-2026 council member's responses to the survey question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?*

The first body of data is provided by the results of administering the survey three times during the 2018-2022 term of council.

This is likely a unique body of data in that it appears to be the only one of its kind in studies of municipal governments in Canada. Indications are that it may soon be joined by similar surveys conducted in other centres. However, in the immediate term it is prudent to limit extending any generalizations from the Ottawa data to other jurisdictions. **(3)**

The second body of data consists of statements by citizens in broadcast media and social media productions about quality of access to City of Ottawa public records.

In the next sections we explore how these two data sets can be used to analyze how well the survey question measures City of Ottawa politicians' regard for citizens' access to City of Ottawa records.

C. What do the Survey Data Tell Us about the 2018-2022 Council's Regard for Citizen's Access to City of Ottawa Records?

To put the survey data in perspective, it would be advantageous from a confirmatory research perspective to have a sound body of data already in place to measure politicians' demonstrated regard for citizens' access to City of Ottawa public records. That data set could then be used to support or challenge the findings previously derived from one or more precedent data sets.

Based on multiple searches, it does not appear that there is such a body of data. Further, after three surveys and numerous communications with politicians, city staff, researchers, and community groups, no reason has been found to nurture the notion that there is any other body of data pertinent to the chronicling project. **(4)**

And that finding brings us back to the survey data, which appear to be the only data available as a basis for ascertaining the regard held by Ottawa's 2018-2022 mayor and councillors for citizens' access to City of Ottawa public records.

In terms of the robustness of the data, three surveys were undertaken: Dec.19 2018 to Feb.14, 2019; March 26, 2019 to April 10, 2019; and Dec. 3, 2019 to Dec. 21, 2019.

The results of survey #3 are presented in Table 1 as a refresher identifying the members of the 2018-2022 council, and their responses after being asked for the third time, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records?*

Details about the survey response scores are presented in numerous previous reports. They are not included here to reduce distraction from the five City of Ottawa politicians who said 'yes' to a question which deals with a fundamental feature of governance in a free and democratic society and the 19 City of Ottawa politicians councillors who chose to not agree that *citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the City of Ottawa*.

By way of a brief context comment, members of council had ample time to study materials, and to think about their disposition of the survey question. There is every reason to believe that members of council were able to give the survey question all the consideration that they believed the matter deserved. No rush to judgement, you might say, and plenty of time between surveys for sober second thoughts.

Further, the three surveys were spread out over a year. Numerous events and situations involving citizens' access to City of Ottawa records occurred during that time frame, and all members of council would have been exposed to claims and complaints about access problems, concerns, issues, proposals, etc.

It therefore appears fair to say that after three surveys we have sufficient observations to draw relatively firm conclusions about each politician's position when it comes to answering a question about citizens' access to City of Ottawa records. **(5)**

The previous survey reports reveal that the percentages of 'yes' responses by the 2018-2022 council were 12.5%, 21%, and 21%.

**Table 1. Scorecard of Responses by Ottawa Council 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?***

<u>Member of Council</u>	<u>Response Scores</u>		
	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Mayor Jim Watson	No	No	No
Councillor Steven Blais	No	No	No
Councillor Riley Brockington	Yes	Yes	Yes
Councillor Rick Chiarelli	No	No	No
Councillor Jean Cloutier	No	No	No
Councillor George Darouze	No	No	No
Councillor Diane Deans	No	No	No
Councillor Laura Dudas	No	No	No
Councillor Eli El-Chantiry	No	No	No
Councillor Mathieu Fleury	No	No	No
Councillor Glen Gower	No	No	No
Councillor Jan Harder	No	No	No
Councillor Allan Hubley	No	No	No
Councillor Theresa Kavanagh	No	Yes	Yes
Councillor Rawlson King	---	Yes	Yes
Councillor Jeff Leiper	No	No	No
Councillor Matt Luloff	No	No	No
Councillor Catherine McKenney	Yes	Yes	Yes
Councillor Carol Anne Meehan	No	No	No
Councillor Shawn Menard	Yes	Yes	Yes
Councillor Scott Moffatt	No	No	No
Councillor Tobi Nussbaum	No	---	---
Councillor Jenna Sudds	No	No	No
Councillor Tim Tierney	No	No	No

Source: [Interim Report 17. 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 Third Citizen Access Survey–Political Buzzwords, 79%; Drivers, 21%](#)

And, the percentages of responses other than ‘yes’, including non-responses, were 87.5%, 79%, and 79% respectively. ([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 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 17. 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 Third Citizen Access Survey–Political Buzzwords, 79%; Drivers, 21%\)](#)

If we take the two final surveys as a reasonable approximation of council’s evolving position on the survey question, council comes in at about 20% in favour of ensuring that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records. And, conversely, about 80% of council did not respond ‘yes’ to the question, Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records?

Clearly, politicians in the ‘not yes’ camp far exceed those in the ‘yes’ group, and the interpretation challenge is “What can be inferred from that finding?”

In general, we are asking whether statements by citizens published in broadcast media and social media productions about quality of access to City of Ottawa records are consistent with the survey numbers.

And, we are asking specifically if there could be a causal relationship between

(A) The large majority of Ottawa politicians who did not say ‘yes’ to the survey question, Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records?

and

(B) The proportion of statements by citizens which are critical rather than supportive of the quality of access that they have to City of Ottawa records?

Or, to rephrase, is there a significant correlation between the proportion of members of council who did not say ‘yes’ to improved citizen access to public records, and the proportion of complaints by citizens about lack of proper access to City of Ottawa records?

The next section begins to examine that relationship by an overview of findings from reviewing broadcast and social media sources for statements by citizens regarding their views, opinions, etc., about access to City of Ottawa records.

D. Statements by Citizens in Broadcast Media and Social Media Productions about Quality of Access to City of Ottawa Records

During every year of a council term, access to records-related items of concern to citizens generate from one to dozens, hundreds, thousands, and in some cases many thousands of broadcast and social media entries. Fortunately, because no city government to my knowledge publishes data on access to records complaints, media productions are relatively easy to search, review, and document when investigating how citizens regard the effort or lack of effort by politicians to provide citizens free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records.

Further, and consistent with the research design for the chronicling project, there are basically two sides to statements by citizens about access to City of Ottawa records.

That is, access to records is free, and/or easy, and/or timely, and/or direct, and/or online, and/or meets some other condition deemed important by citizens.

And alternatively, access to records is not free, and/or not easy, and/or not timely, and/or not direct, and/or not online, and/or does not meet some other condition deemed important by citizens.

In either case, and as might be expected from surveys of the 2018-2022 council, searches did not yield any City of Ottawa or other productions which speak to this matter. **(6)**

However, as part of the methodological design of the chronicling project, and in association with submissions to the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, City of Ottawa, I have been compiling statements which I believe provide a fair basis for ascertaining how well the survey question measures City of Ottawa politicians' regard for citizens' access to City of Ottawa records.

In terms of comments praising City of Ottawa practices affecting citizens' access to City of Ottawa records, my online searches of broadcast media, councillors' newsletters, city committee reports, public interest groups postings, and area social media site postings did not uncover even a slim volume of praise-related evidence. **(7)**

Moreover, communications with others engaged in public information, public transparency, and public accountability research did not yield any positive comments about City of Ottawa practices promoting citizens' access to the city's public records.

However, on the negative, critical, or complaint side, it is a dramatically different story about the numerous failures of the 2018-2022 City of Ottawa council to provide citizens

anything even remotely approaching free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records.

Table 2 presents a selection of the many hundreds of topics which citizens have identified when complaining about lack of proper access to city records reporting on city administration, agencies, boards, commissions, committees, events, functions, operations, research expertise, contract situations, etc. **(8)**

Table 2. A Selection of Topics Identified by Citizens in Complaints about Lack of Proper Access to City of Ottawa Records, 2018-2022

Access to public records applied research
Advisory committees
Affordable housing
Bill 23
City budgets
City committee appointments
City research expertise
Civic Hospital
Climate change research
Code of conduct complaints
Conflict of interest complaints
Councillors' office budgets
COVID-19 data, reports, research methodology
Cyber attacks
Emergency events
Infrastructure maintenance/upkeep
Lansdowne Park redevelopment contracts
LeBreton Flats redevelopment
LRT agreements
LRT mechanical failures
LRT technical failures
LRT test evaluations
LRT test procedures
Mayor's office budgets
Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs)
OC Transpo route changes
OC Transpo service failures
Official Plan Review
Office of Integrity Commissioner
Ottawa Police Service accountability
Ottawa Police Service budgets

Ottawa Police Service carding practices
Ottawa Police Service disciplinary practices
Ottawa Police Service operations
Ottawa Police Service performance data
Ottawa Police Service transparency
Ottawa Police Services Board accountability
Ottawa Police Services Board meeting procedures
Ottawa Police Services Board operations
Ottawa Police Services Board transparency
Planning Committee
Public housing
Public-Private Partnership contracts
Public safety
Storm water ponds
Strengthening accountability of municipal politicians
Sustainable transportation research
Transit Committee
Transportation Master Plan
Truck convoy by-law enforcement
Truck convoy occupation
Urban boundary review
Waste disposal contracts
Waste disposal research
Website functionality
Westboro bus crash

The bottom line of the access scorecard is that during the 2018-2022 term of Ottawa council, there were a significant number of public complaints about failed access to records and, in the absence of locating any argument to the contrary, there were a relatively miniscule number of statements praising access to the city's public records.

E. Survey Question Validity Test Results: Validity Confirmed

On the one hand, 80% of the members of 2018-2022 City of Ottawa council did not say 'yes' to the question,

*Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy,
timely, and direct online access to public records?*

And, on the other hand, more than 95% of the statements by citizens published or posted in broadcast media and social media about the quality of access to City of Ottawa records were found to be negative.

And, consistent with the design of the survey question, most of the statements identified one or more of the following shortcomings, weaknesses, complaints, criticisms, objections, challenges, and protests:

- Access was not free.
- Access was not easy.
- Access was not timely.
- Access was not direct.
- Access was not online.

A working hypothesis, if you will, is that one result of the 2018-2022 council members' choice to not say 'yes' to a basic transparency and accountability question was the resulting preponderance of citizen's complaints about access to records.

Or, to rephrase to provide a different perspective, the decision by a majority of council to not respond to the survey question was a pointer or indicator of great significance.

Namely, the question was apparently unearthing a deep tendency among a group of council members, including Mayor Jim Watson, to constrain if not shut down citizen access to City of Ottawa records, and especially records dealing with issues that irritated citizens.

And that shutdown situation prompted numerous challenges by citizens.

That is, more than 95% of comments by citizens about access to records are negative, which shows a very significant correlation between the 80% of council who did not say 'yes' to the survey question, and the 95% or more negative statements made in media sources by citizens about the failed quality of access to City of Ottawa records. **(9)**

And that finding brings us to the 25 members of the current council, and the 'baggage' which it inherited from the previous council regarding complaints about access to public records.

In brief, none of them can reasonably plead ignorance of complaints.

The 13 returnees to council -- Brockington, Curry, Darouze, Dudas, Gower, Hubley, Kavanagh, King, Kitts, Leiper, Luloff, Menard, Tierney -- were part of the access to records problem at city hall over the 2018-2022 period.

And the 12 newcomers to council -- Bradley, Brown, Carr, Desroches, Devine, Hill, Johnson, Kelly, Lo, Plante, Sutcliffe, Troster -- must surely have noticed at least several hundred of the many hundreds of complaints on topics such as those listed in Table 2.

(10)

With validity of the survey question confirmed as a research instrument, we now proceed to analysis of responses by 2022-2026 council members to the question,

Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?

F. Analysis and Implications of Responses to Survey #1 by 2022-2026 Council Members

Ten members of council responded 'yes' to the survey question, and they are identified in Figure 1.

Fifteen members of council did not respond 'yes', and they are identified in Figure 2.

Of analytical significance at this time is appointments to standing committees and, most particularly, the implications of appointments to committees which:

- 1) Have a negative record regarding complaints by citizens about access to records.
- 2) Are likely to be challenged by higher access demands than in the prior term.
- 3) Are likely to be also dealing with new or different access challenges.

And, of particular importance to citizens, including potential candidates for office, as well as community associations and other public interest groups, is a record of council members' responses and nonresponses to the survey question.

With this recording approach, citizens and other entities have a clear understanding of the number of politicians on each committee who responded 'yes', and the number who did not respond 'yes'.

Or to be more specific, it identifies all the members of council who did not respond 'yes' to a core governance question, and also did not respond with a no, maybe, could be, etc. That is, they did not respond. Period.

A cone of silence descended upon them, you might say, shades of the Watson days.

And that possibility should set off alarms for citizens who expect politicians to answer reasonable, pertinent questions.

The responses are presented in Table 3, following Figure 1 and Figure 2 which portray the 'yes' responders to the survey question, and the other members of council.

Figure 1. Members of Ottawa Council, 2022-2026 Who Did Respond ‘Yes’ to the Survey #1 Question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records held by the City of Ottawa?*

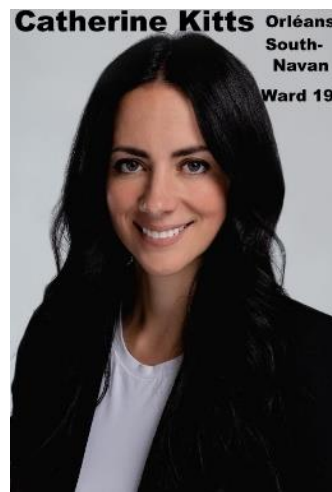
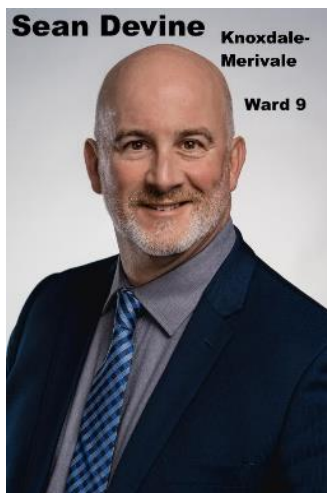
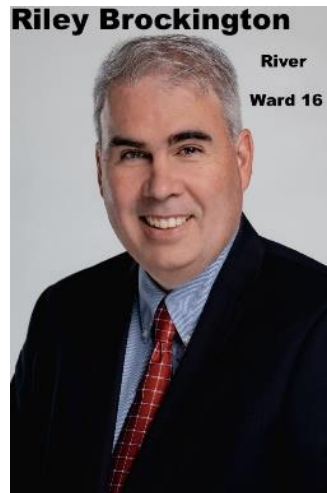


Figure 2. Members of Ottawa Council, 2022-2026 Who Did Not Respond ‘Yes’ to the Survey #1 Question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records held by the City of Ottawa?*



Table 3. Record of ‘Yes’ Responses to the Survey Question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records?*

<u>Member of Council</u>	<u>Record of ‘Yes’ and ‘Not Yes’ Responses*</u>
Mayor Mark Sutcliffe	0/1
Councillor Jessica Bradley	1/1
Councillor Riley Brockington	4/4
Councillor David Brown	1/1
Councillor Marty Carr	0/1
Councillor Cathy Curry	0/1
Councillor George Darouze	0/4
Councillor Steve Desroches	0/1
Councillor Sean Devine	1/1
Councillor Laura Dudas	0/4
Councillor Glen Gower	0/4
Councillor David Hill	0/1
Councillor Allan Hubley	0/4
Councillor Laine Johnson	1/1
Councillor Theresa Kavanagh	3/4
Councillor Clarke Kelly	0/1
Councillor Rawlson King	4/4
Councillor Catherine Kitts	1/4
Councillor Jeff Leiper	0/4
Councillor Wilson Lo	0/1
Councillor Matt Luloff	1/4
Councillor Shawn Menard	4/4
Councillor Stéphanie Plante	0/1
Councillor Tim Tierney	0/4
Councillor Ariel Troster	0/1

*The numerator represents ‘Yes’ and ‘Not Yes’ responses, and the denominator represents the number of surveys administered to newcomers to council (1) and returnees to council (3+1 = 4). **(11)**

According to the City of Ottawa website, it has 13 standing committees, commissions, sub-committees, and other bodies, and nine boards.

Table 4 presents the scores of committees, commissions, and boards selected for this report, and the percentages reveal the amount of support in each committee for ensuring that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to records of the respective committees. The selected committees, sub-committees and boards are ranked in order of 'yes' responses to the survey question.

A percentage of 75-80 or more likely indicates that the committee is solidly on board in principle; a percentage above 60-65 suggests things are on the hopeful side; a percentage above 50 suggests things are iffy with potential; and anything less than 50% suggests a tough slog for citizens, with 40 per cent or less likely indicating that one or more layers of the cone of silence left over from the previous (Watson) council are in play.

**Table 4. Ranking Committees, Commissions, and Boards According to Survey #1
Declarations of 'Yes' to the Question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?***

<u>Committee/Commission/Board</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Environment and Climate Change	19/29	66%
Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services	8/23	33%
Finance and Corporate Services	14/42	33%
Transit	8/24	33%
Planning and Housing	10/33	30%
Light Rail	4/18	22%
Transportation	5/30	17%
Police Services Board	0/3	0%

Due to both functional and structural changes in some of many relationships between and among the 2018-2022 committees, commissions, sub-committees, and boards and those of 2022-2026, the selected committees, sub-committees, commissions, and boards are discussed in the following order in Figure 3:

1. Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee
2. Environment and Climate Change Committee
3. Finance and Corporate Services Committee
4. Planning and Housing Committee
5. Transportation Committee

- 6. Transit Commission
- 7. Light Rail Sub-Committee
- 8. Police Services Board

For ease of tracking the responses in Figure 3, members of council who said 'yes' to the survey question are highlighted in green, all others are highlighted in red.

The scores for each committee, commission, etc., combine the responses of members, with a green highlight signifying a ratio of 50% or more, and a red highlight a ratio of 49% or less.

Figure 3. Comments on How Responses to Survey #1 by 2022-2026 Council Members Could Affect Committee and Police Services Board Decisions about Citizens' Access to Records

1. Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services (EPPS) Committee Score: 8/23

Members: Brockington, Hill, Bradley, Desroches, Devine, Dudas, Hubley, Johnson, Kelly, Luloff, Plante

During the last term of council, Ottawa experienced a number of emergency preparedness and protective service events, including snowstorms, ice storms, a derecho, tornadoes, floods, a truck convoy occupation, power outages, repeat COVID episodes, and a string of LRT missteps, mishaps, and muck-ups.

There is no reason to expect that things will change much this term, and odds are that some of those kinds of events will increase in frequency, intensity, severity, and impacts.

Such events call for citizens to have free, easy, timely, and direct access to city records (e.g., text and graphic digital data and information), with emphasis on geographic information systems science, technology, and applications. **(12)**

Further, due to the threatening nature and immediacy of these events, the importance to citizens of all the conditions of free, easy, timely, direct, and online or electronic variations of online access is paramount. **(13)**

However, the unfortunate implications of a score of 8/23 cannot be overstated.

On its face a score of 8/23 does not indicate that members of the EPPS Committee are likely to aggressively pursue achieving even a satisfactory level of informing and listening to the public on emergency preparedness and protective services matters, much less seek to achieve a best practice level.

One heads-up message that a score of **8/23 (33%)** has for citizens is to immediately take the lead in asking questions and seeking answers of this Committee regarding emergency preparedness and protective services matters.

With that push by citizens, EPPS Committee members may be persuaded to 'up their game' in terms of improving access to records which can be used by citizens to assess the transparency and accountability of council's actions.

2. Environment and Climate Change (ECC) Committee Score: 19/29

Members: Menard, Carr, Brockington, Brown, Curry, Devine, Hill, Kavanagh, King, Luloff, Tierney

The Environment and Climate Change Committee has its own package of initiatives, as well as a need to know regarding the actions of many other committees, including Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee, Planning and Housing Committee, Transportation Committee, Transit Commission, and Light Rail Sub-Committee.

In terms of its own effectiveness and efficiency, the ECC Committee needs easy, timely, and direct online access to the records of other committees, and could be deemed the equivalent of a 'friend in court' in pursuit of ensuring that council provides citizens free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records.

It is therefore a very fortunate implication that the score for this committee is **19/29**, for two reasons in particular.

First, only 40% of council declared support for citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to records, so any committee score over 40% is a positive sign for citizens being accorded free, easy, timely, and direct online access to records of the subject committee.

Second, with at least one committee having a score above 50%, indications are that the cone of silence which descended many times in many ways during the 2018-2022 Watson council did not fully descend during the early days of the 2022-2026 Sutcliffe council when committees were struck.

3. Finance and Corporate Services (FCS) Committee Score: 14/42

Members: Sutcliffe, Kitts, Brockington, Curry, Darouze, Dudas, Gower, King, Leiper, Luloff, Menard, Tierney

This committee consists of the mayor and committee chairs, and on its face a score of **14/42** is disastrously low for many reasons, several of which are noted here.

First, citizens have an abiding interest in knowing about the disposition of their tax dollars, which requires the highest level of transparency and accountability of all politicians and especially committee chairs.

A score of **14/42** for the mayor and committee chairs on money matters does not inspire confidence that the FCS Committee will strive to ensure that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa financial and corporate service public records.

Second, a low Finance and Corporate Services Committee score of **14/42** has the unfortunate implication that citizens could be facing another round of the cone of silence treatment on money matters.

As citizens are aware, much is made of property tax promises during election campaigns, but when it comes to measuring and evaluating transparency and accountability actions, citizens need to see the books, and that means free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa financial and corporate service records.

Third, in terms of asking where the money goes and what citizens get for their tax dollars, citizens have raised numerous questions about Ottawa Police Service (OPS), which has an annual budget now in the vicinity \$400 million, with seemingly automatic annual increases in the 2%-3% range, year after year after year.

However, despite annually eating a large chunk of every city budget, OPS does not sit at the Finance and Corporate Services Committee table. As a result, there is a huge transparency and accountability information shortfall when citizens seek records that compare and contrast what kinds of bangs they are getting for the bucks expended by decisions of various committees and OPS.

During the term of the last council, there was no end of complaints from citizens about lack of access to records that demonstrated in evidence-based detail why OPS budgets seem to automatically increase year after year, but with little to no evidence which demonstrates value for money achieved as a result of OPS expenditures. We return to this matter in the Police Services Board section.

Fourth, discussions and decisions at FCS Committee have a major impact on the activities of other committees.

During the 2018-2022 term numerous complaints were made by citizens and non-Watson club councillors about the cone of silence imposed on FCS Committee deliberations, and about the Watson club presence that limited citizens' access to full

disclosure of records and, hence, their capability to conduct transparency and accountability audits.

A score of **14/42 (33%)** for FCS should discourage any notions that citizens have about sitting back and counting on being kept in the financial and corporate services loop, even though it is their money on the table.

Or, to rephrase, a score of **14/42** is a heads-up to citizens to immediately take the lead in asking questions and seeking answers of the FCS Committee on money matters.

With that push by citizens, the mayor and committee chairs may be persuaded to 'up their game' in terms of improving access to records which can be used by citizens to assess the transparency and accountability of council's financial and corporate services decisions and actions.

4. Planning and Housing Committee (PHC) Score: 10/33

Members: Leiper, Gower, Brockington, Curry, Dudas, Johnson. Kavanagh, Kelly, Kitts, Lo, Tierney, Troster

During the 2018-2022 term, numerous planning-related complaints, concerns, and questions were lodged by citizens on topics such as Official Plan Review, Official Plan amendments, Urban Boundary Review, Ontario Land Tribunal 'cave-ins' by council, unexplained conflicts between politicians and staff, code of conduct issues, conflict of interest issues, terminology issues, zoning by-law amendment issues, developer bias in planning chair rulings, developer bias in committee meeting discourse, and developer bias in committee decisions.

And, in recognition of a hot button planning and housing issue for many residents, the Watson council with emphasis on the Planning committee was abysmally silent on Bill 23. **(14)**

Many of those complaints were based in part or whole on citizens not having proper access to city records, and many were based in part or whole on citizens' experiences of their records (e.g., submissions and petitions) not being given due consideration by staff or by politicians, or were not properly incorporated into city records. **(15)**

The bottom line is that throughout 2018-2022, Planning Committee was bottom-of-the-barrel, so to speak, when it came to informing and listening to residents on planning matters, with inadequate access to records being fundamental to the malaise which seemed to affect every ward in the city, but certainly some more than others due to uneven development pressures, and to failures by councillors to keep residents properly informed about development proposals and zoning applications.

With a score of 10/33, the grim implication is that Planning and Housing Committee has the apparent makings of a developers' delight and a citizens' and community associations' nightmare.

That is, residents count on politicians to provide all necessary records in a timely manner, but such is not the case for developers who can employ staff to acquire needed records as part of a project and write off expenses as a cost of doing business.

The addition of a housing component to planning substantially increases the complexity of messaging to, from, and within this committee, and there is no apparent evidence that the complexity of messaging has been addressed in operational terms.

One heads-up message that a score of **10/33 (30%)** has for citizens is to immediately take the lead in asking questions and seeking answers of this committee regarding planning and housing matters.

Bill 23 is a critical place for citizens to start, because much of what the Planning and Housing Committee does for the foreseeable future will likely be driven in large measure by responding to and accommodating the terms of Bill 23. **(16)**

Council's apparent non-start or very slow start on Bill 23 examinations, and lack of informing citizens on this topic, is worrisome to say the least.

A number of other municipal councils have already confronted Bill 23 head-on, while past and present Ottawa councils have been singularly remiss in providing substantive communications to citizens.

Based on an apparent lack of action to date regarding Bill 23, it appears that it is up to citizens to persuade Planning and Housing Committee members to 'up their game' on that file, and to ensure the provision of proper access to records which can enable citizens to critically assess the transparency and accountability of decisions and actions by this committee and by council.

And, if proper records are provided in a free, easy, timely and direct online manner, citizens will also be able to better assess the transparency and accountability of Bill 23 decisions and actions by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the provincial government.

5. Transportation Committee (TC) Score: 5/30

Members: Tierney, Kitts, Bradley, Darouze, Desroches, Devine, Dudas, Gower, Johnson, Lo, Luloff, Troster

In ranking terminology, the phrase 'worst of the worst' comes to mind to describe a score of 5/30, and the potentially dire implications of this score cannot be overstated.

On a daily basis everyone in the community has an interest in transportation, whether for trips to work, play, school, health services, shopping, etc., by walk, cycle, public transit (bus, LRT), or private vehicle modes, or for the transport of cargo or freight to and from businesses, stores, shops, food places, institutions, construction sites, residences, and so on.

Consequently, many citizens regularly have questions and concerns about the state of various aspects of the transportation system and its sub-systems, often with emphasis on the need for access to location-based near-time and real-time records. **(17)**

Further, from a big picture perspective, Ottawa has been notoriously neglectful when it comes to integrating land use planning and transportation planning. As a result, numerous complaints are lodged by residents across the city about the lack of timely, comprehensive records detailing the impacts of land use development proposals and projects on transportation system performance. **(18)**

And, conversely, questions arise concerning the impacts of changes to parts of transportation systems and sub-systems on other parts of transportation systems and sub-systems, as well as on land uses. **(19)**

During the 2018-2022 term, transportation was the subject of many complaints and concerns about lack of easy, timely, and direct online access to records, and there is no reason to expect the 2022-2026 term to be otherwise, although there could be significantly different complaints and concerns.

That is, as of this writing there is a vigorous and often divisive debate about the role of telecommuting in federal employment. That debate could continue for a number of years and could require a substantial re-think of Ottawa's transportation demand-transportation supply relationship.

One heads-up message that a score of **5/30 (17%)** has for citizens is to immediately take the lead in asking questions and seeking answers of this committee.

As a possible case in point, more than a decade ago a number of reports were published on the topic of sustainability, including those with specific reference to the City of Ottawa. <https://www.slideshare.net/wellarb/advisory-to-ottawa-council-on-solving-its-transportation-mess1> <https://www.slideshare.net/wellarb/sustainable-transport-is-there-anybody-here-who-can-win-this-game>; <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=4cf96ca7ea1e4dc334bd1f0f95be5a10058b0429>; <https://www.slideshare.net/wellarb/enriching-sustainable-transport-decisions-inputs-from-operations-research-and>; http://wellar.ca/wellarconsulting/TC%20Project_Final%20Report_Final.pdf

Now that the City of Ottawa has an Environment and Climate Change Committee, perhaps citizens might want to bring pressure to ensure:

1. The Transportation Committee ‘bends over backwards’ to consult with the Environment and Climate Change Committee on the sustainability topic before proposing initiatives to support Bill 23-type developments which may not serve and promote sustainability objectives. And,
2. Citizens are integrated into the communications loop for these consultations.

With that push by citizens, Transportation Committee members may be persuaded to ‘up their game’ in terms of improving access to records which can be used by citizens to assess the transparency and accountability of decisions and actions by this committee and by council.

6. Transit Commission (TtC) Score: 8/24

Members: Gower, Curry, Brockington, Carr, Hill, Leiper, Lo, Menard, Tierney

The Transit Committee seemed to be marked throughout the 2018-2022 term by a never-ending string of woes that in many ways revolved around LRT contractual, mechanical, operational, and technical or technological issues that spilled over the LRT tracks onto busways and bus lanes.

And, to compound that problem, the LRT Inquiry revealed that citizens were kept in the dark for months on end about numerous contractual, financial, legal, and testing failures, loopholes, shortcomings, etc.

Former Mayor Jim Watson and former Transit Committee chair Allan Hubley were named in Inquiry reports as the politicians primarily responsible for the cone of silence or code of non-disclosure that restricted citizens’ access to the records needed for transparency and accountability purposes.

We return to this topic in the Light Rail Sub-Committee section which follows.

However, there also was an abundance of media stories about transit problems beyond those directly attributable to LRT issues, and an associated abundance of media complaints and comments by citizens that were based on lack of proper access to records explaining decisions, actions, and failures by the city and OC Transpo to achieve promised and/or expected service outcomes.

There is no reason to expect an easing of citizens’ need to know for the 2022-2026 term. Indeed, there are good reasons to expect that for this term the Transit Commission will be faced by challenges to increase transit utility and reliability.

Further, signs are clear that Transit Commission thinking will be confronted by increased orders of complexity involving changes to ridership sources and sinks, and changes to ridership levels by hours and days of week.

In addition, there will likely be a need for continued provision of bus transit redundancy for the LRT system, which often seems to suffer from a shutdown syndrome, and circumstance points to funding constraints that could significantly affect decisions about shifting from diesel to electric buses. **(20)**

Informing the public about how it makes decisions for 2022-2026 requires Transit Commission to come up with a far better capability and performance than that which existed during 2018-2022.

One heads-up message that a score of **8/24 (33%)** has for citizens is to immediately take the lead in asking questions and seeking answers of the commission, and especially on the topic of sustainability which has been far from the forefront of mass transit thinking at Ottawa city hall.

By way of brief illustration, more than a decade ago I was commissioned by Transport Canada and Transport 2000 to author reports on the topic of sustainability, several with specific reference to the City of Ottawa. <https://www.slideshare.net/wellarb/sustainable-transport-is-there-anybody-here-who-can-win-this-game>; <https://www.slideshare.net/wellarb/transportation-inspiring-a-sustainability-action-agenda>; [BestPracticesFramework SustainableTransitOttawa.pdf](#); <http://wellar.ca/wellarconsulting/SustainableTransportPractices.pdf>.

As numerous media comments make clear, supplemented by inputs from community groups, the City of Ottawa has failed miserably in this domain.

However, now that the City of Ottawa has an Environment and Climate Change Committee, perhaps citizens might want to bring pressure to ensure:

1. The Transit Commission 'bends over backwards' to consult with the Environment and Climate Change Committee on the sustainability topic before proposing initiatives to support Bill 23-type developments which may not serve and promote sustainability objectives. And,
2. Citizens are integrated into the communications loop for these consultations.

With that kind of push by citizens, Transit Commission members may be persuaded to 'up their game' in terms of improving access to records, with emphasis on access to GIS-based records, which can be used by citizens to assess the transparency and accountability of decisions and actions by this committee and by council.

7. Light Rail Sub-Committee (LRSC) Score: 4/18

Members: Desroches, Curry, Gower, Kavanagh, Leiper, Tierney

There were so many negative features of the LRT program during the 2018-2022 term, that there seemed to be no end of questions, comments, complaints, etc., directed at politicians and staff. Many of the relevant details about what could be termed an LRT program horror show are contained in the 637-page final report on the Ottawa Light Rail Transit Public Inquiry, led by Justice William Hourigan.

(<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/lrt-inquiry-final-report-ottawa-problems-recommendations-1.6668152>; <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/10-takeaways-from-the-ottawa-lrt-inquiry-final-report-1.6174863>; <https://thenarwhal.ca/ottawa-lrt-public-inquiry/>; <https://globalnews.ca/news/9315097/public-inquiry-released-ottawa-lrt-project/>)

As is often the case when politicians do not properly respond at the outset to questions, inadequate responses in the initial rounds of LRT questioning led to more and more rounds of questions, comments, complaints, etc., which in turn led to many citizens losing confidence in what they were being told by politicians and by staff.

And that loss of confidence problem was compounded by lack of access to official records which, as a further consequence, deepened and sharpened citizens' already sour impressions of what they thought they knew about the reasons behind the LRT program's ongoing string of woes.

The question therefore arises as to whether having a dedicated Light Rail Sub-Committee means actual substantive changes, or is this primarily a re-branding exercise designed to create the impression that the errors of the Transit Committee in 2018-2022 will not be repeated? (<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-council-backs-pitch-for-new-lrt-committee-at-first-meeting-after-public-inquiry-report>.)

From the perspective of this research, one thing that needs to undergo significant change is ensuring that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to all LRT records. No more secrets and no more cones of silence.

Which brings me to the Light Rail Sub-Committee score of **4/18 (22%)**.

The phrase, "Be afraid, be very, very afraid" comes to mind for two reasons in particular.

First, multiple failures of the 2018-2022 council led by Jim Watson, and by then-transit chair Allan Hubley, to provide proper records for citizens went far beyond casual oversight. Instead, it appears fair to say, the failures got deep into 'black hole' territory due to an unrelenting inclination to ignore a sense of duty to properly inform citizens.

And second, the score of **4/18** for this Transit Committee is consistent with more of the cone of silence treatment, rather than an enlightened, proactive approach to informing and listening to the public on LRT matters.

One overriding implication of the score of **4/18** for citizens is to immediately challenge this committee to demonstrate how it intends to ensure that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to LRT records, all LRT records. No cone of silence, no secret communications or side deals.

It bears repeating that the LRT program is a multi-billion dollar enterprise which to date has been fraught with mishaps, missteps, and muck-ups, and the time has long passed for citizens to have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to records needed to hold politicians (as well as staff and contractors) to transparency and accountability standards appropriate for a multi-billion dollar program with massive, long-term social, economic, environmental, financial, etc., impacts.

8. Ottawa Police Services Board (OPSB) Score: 0/3

Members: Carr, Curry, Sutcliffe

Ottawa Police Service (OPS) which is 'overseen' by Ottawa Police Service Board (OPSB), was subject to questions, comments, concerns, criticisms, and challenges seemingly every day throughout the 2018-2022 term.

And, consistent with a chronic failure syndrome, many of those questions, comments, concerns, criticisms, and challenges were repeats or variations of questions, comments, concerns, criticisms, and challenges that had not been properly answered, explained, justified, etc., by OPS or OPSB on numerous occasions over many years.

Anyone who spent an hour watching Ottawa news stories during the truck convoy occupation knows what I mean, as do those who pay attention to such incidents as the death of Abdirahman Abdi after a violent arrest in 2016, or the failed explanations as to why speeding is a top-of-list complaint across the city year after year, or why major crimes are solved at a rate of about 30%, or why the City of Ottawa is so slow to install speed cameras, or why cruisers with officers on board are assigned to sit hour after hour at road construction sites or building sites, or why multiple officers in uniform attend Ottawa Police Services Board meetings, etc., etc.

From a citizens' perspective, there is a serious transparency and accountability problem when citizens do not have free, easy, timely and direct online access to Ottawa Police Service records, and especially when citizens were billed in the vicinity of \$385 million for 2022, with a likely ask of another \$15 million or more when the asking is done for 2023.

That is, to rephrase, citizens are billed a very large amount of money, \$400 million (approx.) for 2023, but have somewhere between non-existent to very limited access to records of interest which detail what they are getting for their tax dollars.

Under that thick cone of silence deployed by OPS, citizens depend upon OPSB to represent their interests on a \$400 million expenditure, and that includes informing citizens whether funds spent by OPS are the most effective, efficient, economical, and societally beneficial ways to expend those tax dollars on public safety and security matters.

And for many citizens therein lies the rub, because questions, comments, concerns, criticisms, and challenges about failed access to police-related records are also directed at OPSB.

One theme is that over many years OPSB has been more an OPS facilitator than a servant of citizens, with the result that OPSB contributes to an atmosphere of non-transparency and non-accountability that now seems to permeate OPS.

Whether accurate or not, that is the perception, and two questions arise:

1. Will the current OPSB membership do anything to ensure that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to OPS records which are not legitimately 'off limits' to public scrutiny for privacy, confidentiality, or other legal or statutory reasons?
2. In the absence of OPS and OPSB at the Finance and Corporate Services (FCS) Committee table, will OPSB ensure that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to all OPS records of a financial nature?

In brief response of a heads-up nature, two of the three council representatives (Carr, Sutcliffe) on OPSB are 'newbies' with no council experience and no OPSB experience.

Curry was on the Watson council and OPSB for six months replacing Jenna Sudds, and during her time there OPSB was subject to many critical reviews, including <https://www.tvo.org/article/where-was-the-ottawa-police-services-board-during-the-convoy-occupation>.

Further, a score of **0/3 (0%)** has brutal implications for residents wanting free, easy, timely, and direct online access to OPS records..

That is, police service operations are a formidable force for non-disclosure within municipal governments across Ontario, and for decades Ottawa and forces of former area municipalities have been no exception in that regard for decades. **(21)**

Word is already out that the politicians on the OPSB are OPS 'sympathizers', and if that perception is in play so early in the term, then implications for citizens are dire when it comes to gaining free, easy, timely, and direct online access to OPS records. **(22)**

For concerns such as those noted, the message for citizens is to be very concerned that, based on their non-responses to survey #1, the politicians on OPSB are not likely to be inclined to 'open the OPS books'.

As we know from numerous experiences of the 2018-2022 council, cone of silence tactics proved to be destructive, wasteful, and counterproductive in all cases, and there is every reason to believe that sheltering OPS records from scrutiny by citizens will lead to similar outcomes during this term of council.

Moreover, serving as a friend in court for OPS was identified as a major problem for the last OPSB, and especially for citizens who were left adrift for months after the truck convoy was finally dispatched.

The bottom line is that the current OPSB was encumbered with a lot of baggage from the previous OPSB, and that sorry situation is self-compounded by this OPSB which is already being criticized for putting service to OPS ahead of putting public service front and centre.

Lessons from the past inform us that when politicians are pressured, self-preservation takes hold, politicians bail, and citizens are too often left holding the bag, being stuck with the tab, and often left out of the communications loop.

One of the easiest things that OPSB politicians could and should do, and citizens can assist them see the light by applying some heat, is to ensure that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to OPS records.

If that path is not taken then contentious and fractious exchanges between citizens and OPSB, which are a matter of record just six weeks into the 2022-2026 term, are likely precursors for more of the same. Surely that is not good enough for what is often referred to by City of Ottawa politicians as a "world class city".

G. Is Survey #1 a Sign that the Cone of Silence Still Dominates Ottawa City Hall, or that the 2022-2026 Council Is Committed to Ensuring Citizens have Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to City of Ottawa Records?

The number of members of the 2022-2026 council who replied 'yes' to the question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to*

public records? is three times the number of ‘yes’ responses to survey #1 of the 2018-2022 council.

As a result, with 10/25 of the 2022-2026 council versus 3/24 of the 2018-2022 council responding ‘yes’ to the first survey, movement in principle is in the direction of Ottawa politicians ensuring that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records.

However, with 15/25 members of council not responding to the survey, analysis of the results reveals several implications which should give serious cause for pause to citizens who care about access to records, transparency, and accountability.

And, perhaps, that cause for pause could lead citizens to ask for explanations from the 15 politicians who did not respond ‘yes’ to the survey. **(23)**

The final table in this report, Table 5, examines the ‘yes’ and ‘not yes’ responses of committee chairs, who are responsible for directing the activities of one committee, and also sit on the Finance and Corporate Services Committee.

The ‘yes’ and ‘not yes’ responses of committee chairs are significant to citizens for many reasons, including chair positions as influencers of committee activities, and because they sit at the table where decisions are made about citizens being provided access to records which enable them to ‘follow the taxpayer money’ expended by council.

As shown in Table 5, two chairs answered ‘yes’, five did not, and none of the three council representatives on the Police Service Board answered ‘yes’ to the question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?*

On its face, the preponderance of ‘not yes’ positions has unfortunate implications for citizens who may look to chairs to take the lead in ensuring that citizens have free, easy, timely, and direct online access to city records of interest to citizens.

And, further in that vein, legitimate concerns arise that chairs who do not answer ‘yes’ to a question about citizens having better access to city records could actively work to restrict citizens’ access to city records.

Which brings me to a broader implication of the large number of committee chairs who are in the ‘not yes’ camp.

Concerns about City of Ottawa politicians’ lack of due regard for transparency and accountability have long been a matter of public record, and especially during the Watson council of 2018-2022 when it seemed that chair after chair was under fire for many reasons, one of which was being responsible for unacceptable levels of access to City of Ottawa records.

**Table 5. Responses of Committee/Commission Chairs to the Question,
Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and
direct online access to public records?**

<u>Committee/Commission/Board</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>Not Yes</u>
Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services	Brockington	✓	
Environment and Climate Change	Menard	✓	
Finance and Corporate Services	Sutcliffe		✗
Light Rail	Desroches		✗
Planning and Housing	Leiper		✗
Transit	Gower		✗
Transportation	Tierney		✗
Police Services Board	(Council reps Carr, Curry, and Sutcliffe are in the 'Not Yes' group)		

Unfortunately, both broadcast and social media stories are already prompting remarks about “Watson 2.0”, with 5/7 committee chairs (including Mayor Mark Sutcliffe who, like Watson) not responding ‘yes’ to a survey asking if they agree to give citizens the means – proper access to records – to hold politicians accountable.

And compounding that unfortunate situation are the three OPS Board politicians. None of them responded ‘yes’ to the survey, which compromises notions about their proper representation of citizens on access to records dealings with Ottawa Police Service.

What we appear to have regarding OPS and OPSB, is a mismatch between citizens who want full transparency and accountability through best practices access to public records, an OPS Board which has not given any indication of support in that respect, and a longstanding tradition among municipal police services in Ottawa-Carleton, including the current OPS, to strictly limit citizens’ access to police records.

Based on lessons from the 2018-2022 Watson council, my concerns about a repeat for 2022-2026 led to publishing an op-ed in the Ottawa Citizen prior to the last municipal election, ***Wellar: City of Ottawa must be more transparent. Only voters can make that happen*** -- Here are three questions about accountability to ask municipal election candidates at the door. <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/wellar-city-of-ottawa-needs-to-be-more-transparent-only-voters-can-make-that-happen>

It is of course possible that a chair who did not say 'yes' to the survey question will agree in practice, and it is also possible that a chair who says 'yes' will not act in good faith in practice.

The remaining implication for citizens, therefore, is that since a survey can only go so far, and especially with those who choose to not participate, citizens who are concerned about the results from survey #1 may wish to ask the mayor and councillors directly about their decisions to not reply 'yes' to the question, *Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records?*

As for the question, Is Survey #1 a Sign that the Cone of Silence Still Dominates Ottawa City Hall, or that the 2022-2026 Council Is Committed to Ensuring Citizens have Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to City of Ottawa Records?, it seems apparent that the jury is still out.

Perhaps survey #2 will bring clarity, and especially if citizens become vigorously vocal during the interim and take charge by pushing politicians to step up their game in ensuring citizens free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records.

H. Conclusion

The findings from survey #1 suggest a more promising outlook for citizens being better able to hold City of Ottawa politicians to higher standards of transparency and accountability through improved access to City of Ottawa records.

However, reasons for optimism are compromised by the 'not yes' positions of 15/25 members of council including Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, a majority of chairs of committees and commissions, and all three council representatives on the Ottawa Police Services Board.

At this point in time, therefore, the overarching findings about the state of citizens' access to public records is that there is little evidence which substantively distinguishes the Sutcliffe council from the Watson council with respect to:

A. The frequency and enthusiasm during election campaigns that candidates embrace transparency and accountability of politicians, including themselves, presumably.

B. The failure of a majority of members of both the previous and current councils to agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records, thereby denying them access to records which can be used by citizens to hold politicians to standards of transparency and accountability set by citizens.

Survey #1 of Ottawa's 2022-2026 council reconfirms the widely perceived tendency of politicians to say one thing and do another, even on a core public interest matter of ensuring that citizens have a level of access to public records which enables them to hold politicians to standards of transparency and accountability set by citizens.

In addition, however, this analysis of survey #1 suggests several research tasks to be undertaken prior to administering survey #2 to the 2022-2026 council.

I. Endnotes

1. As discussed in previous reports, the term 'public records' refers to all records held by the City of Ottawa which are not outside public purview for specified legal, statutory, contractual, or other restrictive reasons which are in the public record.
2. The term 'buzzword' is used in reports in the chronicling project to describe using transparency and accountability in ways that signify nothing substantive in verbal and non-verbal communications. Terms and phrases such as blowing smoke, smoke and mirrors, baffle-gab, puffery, fluff, hot air, and prattle are some of the many synonyms for buzzword.
3. The methodology has been tested multiple times with municipal, provincial and federal governments, and the results indicate that it can be applied with confidence to studies involving all levels of government in democratic societies.
4. Numerous keyword searches of Ottawa files, and communications with other researchers and city staff point to that finding. If that is the case, and there is no apparent reason to think otherwise, then that situation begs the question: On what grounds could individual members of Ottawa council, or council as a group, justify any claim made about transparency and accountability if there is no substantive evidence to support the claim?
5. Given the apparent absence of any other data on this matter, the survey data are the best available data for answering questions about the attitudes and inclinations of City of Ottawa politicians regarding citizens' access to City of Ottawa records.
6. It could be argued that absence of reports on this matter is a sign that citizens' access to City of Ottawa public records is not a matter of deemed importance by current or recent City of Ottawa politicians. Indeed, we use the term 'buzzword' to describe politicians' frequent use of the terms transparency and accountability but without agreeing to provide citizens the level of access to records needed to validate politicians' claims. Again, correction of any misimpression is invited.
7. Councillors who communicate with citizens via newsletters and websites can proactively facilitate citizens' access to some public records, but it is likely that any

production can anticipate only a small share of records of interest to citizens. That is a topic in itself and is not pursued in this report.

8. Although reference to both politicians and staff occurred in many complaints, emphasis here is on complaints directed at the mayor, individual councillors, committees consisting of mayor and/or councillors, and the entirety of council.

9. Correlation does not mean causation, but with 80% of council not expressing support for improved citizen access to city records, and complaints by citizens about failed access to city records running at more than 95%, it seems that the numbers constitute a difficult case to logically counterargue.

10. Newcomers to council who experienced access issues during the previous council term, and responded 'yes' to the survey question, may have lessons, suggestions, solutions, etc., to contribute to addressing the citizens' access to records problem. However, newcomers who experienced access issues prior to joining council, and did not respond 'yes' to the survey question, seem to be dubious sources of insight into a problem which they do not seem to consider a problem now that they are in office.

11. Consideration was given to using a weighted system. However, that approach introduces a level of complexity which is best saved for a time when more observations are on file.

12. These events are all location-based, hence the reference to geographic information systems (GIS). I have not been able to identify any committee or sub-committee of council responsible for information technology in general. And more to the point of this report, I have not been able to identify any committee, sub-committee, commission, or board responsible for geographic information systems applications, even though it is highly likely that more than 80% of data holdings by the City of Ottawa are location-based.

13. The immediacy of these events is both temporal and spatial, hence the emphasis on GIS science, technology, and applications. Further, because there are dynamic aspects to many of the events, the need is for higher order science methodologies, information technologies, and applications.

14. The awkward silence of Ottawa council on Bill 23 becomes a deafening silence in the face of news stories that the Auditor General of Ontario, and the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, are investigating allegations of insider benefits that were conveyed to land speculators and the development industry by advance notice of impending Bill 23 legislation.

15. In the spirit of transparency and full disclosure, I am one of those citizens, and have many pages of emails to substantiate my comments, including letters submitted to two City of Ottawa Integrity Commissioners, Robert Marleau and Karen Shepherd.

16. As of this writing (January 28), I have not seen evidence that the Planning and Housing committee is out front on Bill 23, such as by providing substantive reports to citizens about the implications of the investigations by the Ontario Auditor General and the Ontario Integrity Commissioner into possible criminal charges related to Bill 23.

17. As noted previously, it is likely that more than 80% of City of Ottawa data are location-based. A large percentage of that percentage involves a transportation component for all modes (walk, cycle, transit, and private motor vehicle for people; cycle and private motor vehicle for freight) which emphasizes the need for citizens to have best practice access to GIS-based records.

18. There are many hundreds of GIS applications dealing with the impacts of commercial, industrial, institutional, housing, recreation, etc. land use developments on different modes of transport, and those applications are part of the records needed for citizens to hold politicians to levels of transparency and accountability set by citizens.

19. Over the past 50 years numerous GIS applications have been developed to study and represent, for example, the effects of road widenings and intersection modifications on all modes of transport, as well as on the quality of movement of people and freight, and on the reasons for land use planning, development, and other zoning and re-zoning decisions.

Citizens need best practice access to the records generated by use of these GIS applications in order to hold politicians to levels of transparency and accountability set by citizens.

20. One need only say ‘telecommuting by federal employees’ to identify a likely major sticking point for decisions and actions by Transit Committee for the entirety of the 2022-2026 term.

21. There are long-established procedures to protect or clean records, including police records, to prevent access to personal identifiers or other data elements and items in contravention of privacy, confidentiality, or other non-disclosure rights of individuals and corporate entities.

I therefore expect that there would be great interest in learning from OPS and OPSB any substantive reason why citizens why are not entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to Ottawa Police Service records.

22. As a seeming case in point about OPSB politicians being facilitators, advocates, champions, etc., on behalf of Ottawa Police Service, it appears that Mayor Mark Sutcliffe is promoting an increase of 2.5 % in the OPS budget.

However, it seems fair to say that few members of the public have information on where that figure came from, or the basis of the amount, or why the public has not been informed as to the specifics of what it will get for the addition of many more millions of dollars to the police service budget.

23. While a number of politicians on the 2018-2022 council did not respond to my inquiries about their non-responses, citizens provided feedback.

Frequent mention was made of a set of councillors taking directions from former Mayor Jim Watson, hence the references to some councillors being members of 'the Watson club'.

Of course, had councillors explained the reason for their non-responses, and the reason was not due to a cone of silence accord, an instruction, or other intervention, then it is likely that citizens would have benefited from such gestures of transparency and accountability.

I hasten to add as a closing comment that if any explanations are obtained by citizens from members of the 2022-2026 council about their non-responses, I welcome them being forwarded to me.