

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 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%

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A.Context

The first phase of interim reports are now published 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?](#)

The precedent report for interim report 9 is interim report 3, and the tool for comparative recording and analysis purposes is Table 1, which is introduced in interim report 2.

Interim report 8 contains the second survey results from asking City of Ottawa politicians, *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?* The results of survey two are the basis of interim report 9.

While our focus in the pilot study is currently on the City of Ottawa, the relationship under consideration is applicable to every municipal government anywhere in Canada, and for that matter, in any other free and democratic society.

That is, municipal politicians frequently profess their commitment to transparency and accountability, and we are testing that commitment by asking City of Ottawa politicians as the first case study subjects, *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?*

The research hypothesis (RH) 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 these same 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 City of Ottawa 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 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?*

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.

From: Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2019 9:09 AM
To: Jim.Watson@ottawa.ca
Subject: Access to Public Records Email of March 26, 2019.

Mayor Watson,

I look forward to receiving your response to the email communication of March 26, 2019 re **Access to Public Records**

In the spirit of research involving transparency and accountability, if a response is not received by April 10, 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 City of Ottawa.

As you may appreciate, time constraints dictate that we move expeditiously, and it appears fair to say that 11 working days are more than sufficient to deal with an inquiry that should not take more than 10 minutes of considered thought in order to arrive at a reasoned position.

I note in closing that disposition of your response or lack thereof to the earlier communication of December 2018 on this topic can be found in the report, [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%

Finally, as can be seen in Table 1, several ways are used to record non-yes responses. In reports subsequent to Interim report 3, a binary approach of YES or NO is used.

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.

C. Analysis of Second Survey Results

Long story short, there is a huge disconnect between City of Ottawa politicians who proclaim utmost regard for transparency and accountability, but who do not agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records.

That is, as of the second survey, and to the best of my knowledge having not ascertained anything to the contrary from available records, and not having been informed to the contrary, 100% of City of Ottawa council, 24 politicians in all, embrace the concepts of transparency and accountability.

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

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

*The question was included in emails to mayor and councillors on December 19, and 20-23, 2018, and then March 26, 2019, for survey 1 and survey 2 respectively.

** Councillor Tobi Nussbaum resigned from Ottawa City Council before the second survey was administered. His successor Rawlson King won the bye-election held April 15, and attempts to contact him regarding the second survey began April 16. Councillor King replied in the affirmative on April 29.

As for the huge disconnect, it is readily measured. When it comes to operationalizing those concepts in a meaningful way – providing citizens free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records – only five members of council pass the test of being true to the principles of transparency and accountability:

Councillor Riley Brockington
Councillor Theresa Kavanaugh
Councillor Rawlson King
Councillor Catherine McKenney
Councillor Shawn Menard.

With regard to **RH1** then, and at a preliminary level since findings are based on surveys and not detailed interviews, City of Ottawa Councillors Riley Brockington, Theresa Kavanaugh, Rawlson King, Catherine McKenney, and Shawn Menard provide a basis for accepting **RH1**, namely, that to their way of thinking there is a relationship between transparency and accountability on the one hand and citizen access to public records on the other.

While another word may arise as the pilot study proceeds, for the moment City of Ottawa Councillors Riley Brockington, Theresa Kavanaugh, Rawlson King, Catherine McKenney, and Shawn Menard are described as “Truthers”.

The reasoning for describing them as Truthers, perhaps no surprise here, is that they are deemed to be telling the truth about their regard for transparency and accountability because they agree to citizens having free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa records, and those records report on the actions and non-actions of councillors.

As for the remainder of council, by not agreeing that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to City of Ottawa public records, these politicians fail a fundamental test of being true to the principles of transparency and accountability.

The City of Ottawa politicians who fail the fundamental truth test are:

Mayor Jim Watson
Councillor Steven Blais
Councillor Rick Chiarelli
Councillor Jean Cloutier
Councillor George Darouze
Councillor Diane Deans
Councillor Laura Dudas
Councillor Eli El-Chantiry
Councillor Mathieu Fleury
Councillor Glen Gower
Councillor Jan Harder

Councillor Allan Hubley
Councillor Jeff Leiper
Councillor Matt Luloff
Councillor Carol Anne Meehan
Councillor Scott Moffatt
Councillor Jenna Sudds
Councillor Tim Tierney

With regard to **RH2** then, and at a preliminary level since findings are based on surveys and not detailed interviews, City of Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and Councillors Steven Blais, Rick Chiarelli, Jean Cloutier, George Darouze, Diane Deans, Laura Dudas, Eli El-Chantiry, Mathieu Fleury, Glen Gower, Jan Harder, Allan Hubley, Jeff Leiper, Matt Luloff, Carol Anne Meehan, Scott Moffatt, Jenna Sudds, and Tim Tierney provide a basis for accepting **RH2**.

That is, to their way of thinking, based on survey results, there is not a direct, interdependent relationship between transparency and accountability on the one hand and citizen access to public records on the other.

Several words come to mind to describe City of Ottawa politicians who embrace transparency and accountability while not agreeing that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to city of Ottawa 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.

To complete the analysis of second survey results, the numeric bottom line is that:

- 79% of City of Ottawa politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as political buzzwords;
- 21% of City of Ottawa politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as drivers ensuring access to public records in Canada is best practice.

As for the shift from the No side of the ledger to the Yes side by one member of council, Councillor Theresa Kavanaugh, it is prudent to let the numbers speak for themselves in a pilot study setting which appears to be breaking new research ground.

Or, to re-phrase, caution is the appropriate order of the day when examining the results of any survey undertaken in a political arena, and more should not be made of numbers than can be supported by the research methodology.

Hence, we are on safe ground by re-iterating the findings themselves, which are that 21% of City of Ottawa politicians use the terms transparency and accountability as drivers for ensuring access to public records in Canada is best practice, and 79 % use the terms a political buzzwords.

The closing note for this section, again in the spirit of transparency and accountability, is that information from City of Ottawa politicians about contrary evidence is invited.

D. Analysis Implications

In general the analysis implications presented in interim report 3 are pertinent here, and nothing presented in interim report 9 is contrary to materials in interim report 3.

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

The primary inference of the pilot study is that City of Ottawa politicians who agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records held by the City of Ottawa are likely candidates to use the terms transparency and accountability as drivers to ensure that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Five councillors – Riley Brockington, Theresa Kavanaugh, Rawlson King, Catherine McKenney, and Shawn Menard – measure up in this respect (**RH1**). In terms of implications, these councillors are the only members of the Ottawa city council whose views can credibly be employed in research investigating how the terms transparency

and accountability can be used as drivers in efforts to ensure that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Mayor Jim Watson and 18 councillors do not agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to the public records.

As a result, according to the design of the pilot study (**RH2**), the terms transparency and accountability are used by them as political buzzwords and, consequently, none of these politicians is a credible source of thought about using transparency and accountability as drivers to ensure that access to public records in Canada is best practice.

Finally, it appears fair to state that the survey instrument worked properly, and as intended. However, application of the instrument in other municipalities would contribute to testing its robustness, and its potential value to surveys of municipal politicians involving multiple jurisdictions in provincial- and national-scale comparative pilot studies.