

BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CITIZENS' ACCESS TO SPATIAL RECORDS HELD BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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SLIDE PRESENTATION



SESSION ON BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CITIZENS' ACCESS TO SPATIAL RECORDS HELD BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Session organizer: **Barry Wellar**

Session moderator: **Greg Babinski**

Author of session slides: **Barry Wellar**

Slide presenter: **Martha Wells**

Session panelists: **Pete Croswell**

Steve Steinberg

Learned scribe: **Ed Wells**



ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS RESEARCH PROJECT, MARCH 19, 2019

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



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT REPORTS

[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%](#)



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT REPORTS (2)

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?



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT REPORTS (3)

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 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%

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

Interim Report 15. Identifying Tactics Used by Politicians to Restrict Citizens' Access to Public Records

Interim Report 16. Third 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?*



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT REPORTS (4)

[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%](#)

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

[Interim Report 19. Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Reports from the Pilot Study 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 20. Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Communications to Mayor and Councillors that Received 'The Silent Treatment'](#)

[Interim Report 21. Nomination for the 2020 Code of Silence Award: City of Ottawa Supporting Evidence – Media Stories That Indicate a Code of Silence Has Been Adopted by Members of Council](#)



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT REPORTS (5)

[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](#)

[Interim Report 23. 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?](#)

[Thoughts on adding geo-records to the pilot study on best practices for citizen access to public records \(Presentation Slides\)](#)

[Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



FIRST CONFERENCE PRE-TEST OF THE PROJECT RESEARCH DESIGN


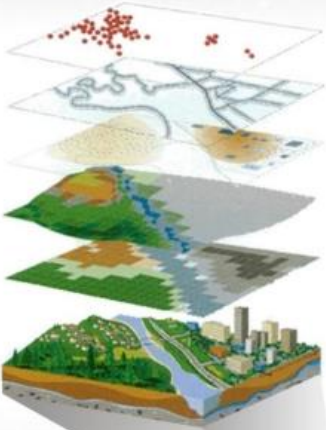
Thoughts on adding geo-records to the pilot study on best practices for citizen access to public records

*Prepared for the Eastern BeSpatial Conference
March 26, 2020, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
(paused due to COVID pandemic, presented June 28, 2023)*



FIRST CONFERENCE PRE-TEST OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

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




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Keynote Presentation

BeSpatial / URISA Ontario
Eastern Regional Event
Queen's University

KINGSTON, ONTARIO
June 29, 2023



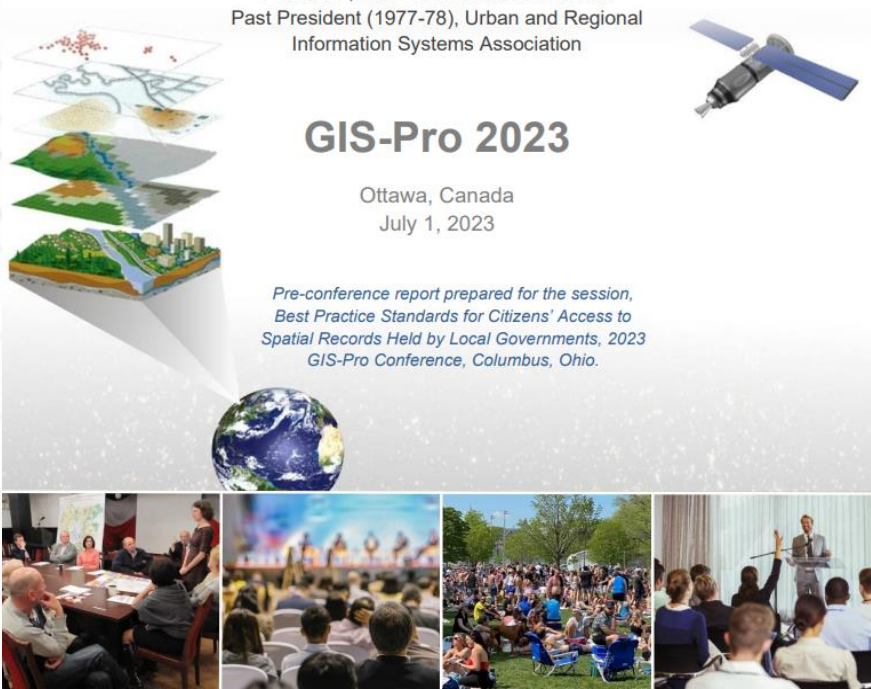
SECOND CONFERENCE PRE-TEST OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

**Contributions by City of Ottawa
Council to Best Practice Standards for
Citizens' Access to Spatial Records
Held by Local Governments**

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M.
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa
President, Information Research Board
Past President (1977-78), Urban and Regional
Information Systems Association

GIS-Pro 2023
Ottawa, Canada
July 1, 2023

*Pre-conference report prepared for the session,
Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to
Spatial Records Held by Local Governments, 2023
GIS-Pro Conference, Columbus, Ohio.*





KEY TAKEAWAY A1 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: STANDARDS OF PRACTICE ARE RELATIVE

A fundamental law of relativity is that standards of practice are relative.



Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



KEY TAKEAWAY A2 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: A FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF RELATIVITY IS THAT STANDARDS ARE RELATIVE

Figure 1. Simple Index to Rank Local Governments Based on Actions to Provide Citizens Free, Easy, Timely, and Direct Online Access to Public Records

<u>Positive</u> level of practice	Best Better Good
<u>Negative</u> level of practice	Bad Worse Worst

Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



KEY TAKEAWAY B1 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: ACCESS BEST PRACTICES ARE DEFINED BY CITIZENS

Specifying elements of a standard of best practice regarding citizens' access to public records held by local governments begins and ends with principles and practices that serve citizens, and all else is flim-flam.

Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



KEY TAKEAWAY B2 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: INITIAL FOCUS MUST BE ON NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT ELEMENTS TO DEFINE BEST PRACTICE

Table 1. Summary explanations for including free, easy, timely, direct, and online as primary elements of a standard of best practice regarding citizens' access to public records held by local governments

- **Free access.** There is no reason to charge fees for access since citizens have already paid governments to produce these records.
- **Easy access.** "User friendly" includes removing time-wasting hurdles. Google, for example, demonstrates how to design intuitive, easy-to use access procedures.
- **Timely access.** Efficient searches for public records occur when keywords lead to the links for texts, images, and other records, including data and information bases. At the municipal level, timely access resides in links to maps and other geographic information system holdings because approximately 80 per cent of municipal data and information holdings are location-based.
- **Direct access.** Fifty years ago, banking changed significantly due to automated teller machines (ATMs), with mobile devices leading to still more changes. Banking shifted out of the business of moving money and into the information processing business and serves as a highly credible precedent for governments to provide citizens direct access to public records.
- **Online access.** Governments already inform Canadians via websites, and there are many reasons for governments to better serve citizens via online access to public records.

Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



KEY TAKEAWAY C1 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: CLAIMS OF 'WORLD CLASS' MEANS BEST PRACTICES FOR CITIZENS' ACCESS ARE IN PLACE

While more than 50 contributions by City of Ottawa council to matters affecting citizens' access to public records have been identified, and 23 are cited, it appears fair to say that none of the contributions is of best practices quality.

Rather, in my experience, they belong in the bad, worse, and worst categories but, from a relative aspect they are useful 'contributions'.

That is, they provide an indication of the scope and depth of the challenge to achieve best practice standards for citizens' access to spatial records held by local governments.

However, critiquing those contributions is a topic for another time and venue.

Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



KEY TAKEAWAY C2 IN PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT: THE TIME TO 'SEIZE THE DAY' IS NOW, AT GIS-PRO 2023

GIS-Pro 2023 explores an expert panel's thinking about two critical concerns of the research agenda:

1. Developing a framework which measures where local governments rank with regard to their access practices for citizens; and
2. Launching a directed, substantive dialogue on how local governments can improve their access to records practices.

Source: [Contributions by City of Ottawa Council to Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments](#)



PURPOSE OF GIS-PRO 2023 SESSION ON BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CITIZENS' ACCESS TO SPATIAL RECORDS HELD BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Obtain Expert Feedback on Designing a Research Agenda to
Achieve Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial
Records Held by Local Governments



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q1. What productions do you suggest including in a reading list on methods for ranking practices implemented by local governments to serve and promote citizens' access to local government records?

Q2. What productions do you suggest including in a reading list on methods for ranking practices implemented by local governments to serve and promote citizens access to local government geo-records?

Q3. What attribute(s) would you add to free, easy, timely, direct, and online as core conditions to be met by access to public records legislation which best serves citizens?

Q4. What attribute(s) would you add to free, easy, timely, direct, and online as core conditions to be met by access to public geo-records legislation which best serves citizens?

Q5. Do you agree that access legislation should refer in general to 'public records', including 'public geo-records', rather than specifically to 'information'? What is the reason for your response?

Q6. Do you believe that the condition "except those records which for special reasons are precluded from access by citizens" is sufficient to ensure that citizens have access to all the records needed to hold public officials to standards of accountability and transparency set by citizens?

Q7. If not, how would you revise that condition or, alternatively, what condition do you believe is sufficient to ensure that citizens have access to all the records needed to hold public officials to standards of accountability and transparency set by citizens?

Q8. Which local government(s) do you recommend GISPs "review" for contributions to worst, worse, bad, good, better, or best practice standards for citizens' access to spatial records?



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q1. What productions do you suggest including in a reading list on methods for ranking practices implemented by local governments to serve and promote citizens' access to local government records?

Q2. What productions do you suggest including in a reading list on methods for ranking practices implemented by local governments to serve and promote citizens access to local government geo-records?



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q3. What attribute(s) would you add to free, easy, timely, direct, and online as core conditions to be met by access to public records legislation which best serves citizens?

Q4. What attribute(s) would you add to free, easy, timely, direct, and online as core conditions to be met by access to public geo-records legislation which best serves citizens?



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q5. Do you agree that access legislation should refer in general to 'public records', including 'public geo-records', rather than specifically to 'information'? What is the reason for your response?



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q6. Do you believe that the condition “except those records which for special reasons are precluded from access by citizens” is sufficient to ensure that citizens have access to all the records needed to hold public officials to standards of accountability and transparency set by citizens?

Q7. If not, how would you revise that condition or, alternatively, what condition do you believe is sufficient to ensure that citizens have access to all the records needed to hold public officials to standards of accountability and transparency set by citizens?



CUTTING TO THE CHASE WITH QUESTIONS THAT MATTER

Q8. Which local government(s) do you recommend GISPs “review” for contributions to worst, worse, bad, good, better, or best practice standards for citizens’ access to spatial records?



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM GIS-PRO 2023 SESSION, BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CITIZENS' ACCESS TO SPATIAL RECORDS HELD BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

This session and its material may offer takeaways on various issues for a number of attendees and readers. For those who identify with the research agenda program, these are the tasks and topics currently assigned highest immediate priority.

1. Surveys of local government politicians asking, "Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely and direct online access to local government records?"
2. Programs to increase citizens engagement in local government activities through improved notification about and access to geo-records.
3. Engaging citizens to identify and rank principles of public access to public records and geo-records.
4. Engaging local government politicians to identify and rank principles of public access to public records and geo-records.
5. Engaging citizens to evaluate local government practices of public access to public records and geo-records.
6. Engaging local government politicians to evaluate practices of public access to public records and geo-records.
7. Designing frameworks to compare levels of access to geo-records provided by local governments to citizens.
8. Identifying organizations to facilitate collaboration on identifying and solving obstacles to improving citizen's access to public records of local governments.



PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS PROJECTS IN PROGRESS BY THE INFORMATION RESEARCH BOARD (IRB) AS OF AUGUST 31, 2023

1. Designing a review of the GIS-Pro 2023 session, Best Practice Standards for Citizens' Access to Spatial Records Held by Local Governments.
2. Second survey of members of City of Ottawa, Ontario council, 2022-2026: Do you agree that citizens are entitled to free, easy, timely, and direct online access to public records held by the City of Ottawa?
3. Evaluation of the Government of Canada review of the federal Access to Information Act.
4. Preparing terms of reference to examine the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) systems and applications on public access to public records in general, and local government records in particular.
5. Preparing terms of reference to examine the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) systems and applications on public access to public geo-records in general, and local government geo-records in particular.
6. Designing a survey of local governments on the standards for public access to public records which they have identified, adopted, and implemented.
7. Designing a survey of local governments on the standards for public access to public geo-records which they have identified, adopted, and implemented.

