

President of the Treasury Board
and Minister of Digital Government



Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
et ministre du Gouvernement numérique

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0R5

The Honourable Larry Bagnell, P.C., M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Bagnell:

Pursuant to House of Commons Standing Order 109, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to provide the Government's Response to the recommendations of the 88th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: *Question of Privilege Related to the Matter of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Publications Respecting Bill C-71, An Act to Amend Certain Acts and Regulations in Relation to Firearms*.

The Government of Canada has a responsibility to inform Canadians about policies, programs, services and initiatives, and of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

The *Policy on Communications and Federal Identity* (Policy) and its supporting instruments establish clear roles and responsibilities for deputy heads, heads of communications, managers and functional specialists, as well as the central coordinating role of the Privy Council Office (PCO).

The Policy and its supporting instruments also establish clear and mandatory requirements for federal departments to ensure their communications with the public are clear, timely, objective, factual, accurate, non-partisan and written in plain language.

These attributes of how government communicates are essential to supporting the fundamental principles of openness, transparency and accountability.

Recommendation #1: That federal government departments and agencies consider indicating the status of the legislation (i.e. the legislative stage of the bill at the time the communications product is made public) for communications products dealing with legislation before Parliament.

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The Government commits to reinforcing with departments and agencies, particularly those officials responsible for the management and coordination of communications activities, that government communications must be timely, clear, objective, factual, accurate, non-partisan and written in plain language. Particular emphasis will be placed on communicating about legislation, and providing clear and accurate depictions of the status of legislation that has not received Royal Assent.

The Privy Council Office plays a central role in government in coordinating government communications and provides functional leadership in the communications community. This role provides the most effective and efficient means of delivering messages, instruction or direction on a matter of government-wide importance to senior management across the public service and to the larger professional government communications community.

The Privy Council Office will provide information government-wide to heads of communications who are responsible for managing departmental communications reminding them of the need for clarity and accuracy when communicating about legislation (in particular legislation that has not received Royal Assent). PCO will also develop guidance about the legislative process, which will be provided to heads of communications. Further messaging will be disseminated to deputy heads about the importance of, and heightened sensitivity around, government communications and status of legislation. These actions will be completed by summer 2019.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of the Standing Committee for your important work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'JM' followed by a long horizontal line.

The Honourable Joyce Murray, P.C., M.P.