

Transparency, Accountability, and Accessibility:
A Comparative Analysis of the Publication of Transition Documents through the Context of
British Columbia, Manitoba, and Canada

By:

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Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Saskatchewan, 2021

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

in the School of Public Administration

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University of Victoria

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Abstract

This thesis sheds light on transparency, accountability, and accessibility efforts through the lens of British Columbia's recently published transition documents. Using a multiple case study approach, with cases being the Government of British Columbia's British Columbia's website and published transition documents from 2020 and 2022, this research discusses similarities and differences between three of British Columbia's ministry's transition binders and compares findings to government transition documents and websites in the Government of Canada and Manitoba. Ultimately, one of the key findings from this research is that British Columbia meets more of the transparency, accountability, and accessibility criteria outlined in this thesis than the Governments of Manitoba and Canada. The research finds that the Government of British Columbia makes it easier for citizens to hold their governments accountable than the Governments of Canada and Manitoba. Regarding accessibility and transparency, British Columbia performs well: on par with the Government of Canada and better than the Government of Manitoba. Additionally, ministry-specific findings in British Columbia prove that ministries may be given some level of independence when supporting these initiatives. The thesis also identifies the areas where British Columbia has the potential to improve these metrics when publicizing its binders.

Keywords: e-government; government transparency; government accessibility; government accountability; government transitions; transition documents

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am immensely grateful for the patience, guidance, and support of my supervisor, Dr. Kimberly Speers, my second reader, Dr. Walter Lepore, and my proxy, Dr. Evert Lindquist. It has been an absolute pleasure to bounce ideas off of each other, and I deeply value the encouragement and feedback they provided me throughout the process of this work. Thank you to the other faculty members who have supported my education at the University of Victoria; in which there are too many to name. Finishing this thesis would also not be possible without the encouragement of my incredible support system. In particular, I am grateful for my partner, Daniel Kiesman, and my parents, Candis and Quinten Olynyk.

Dedication

To my parents for believing in me and being my biggest supporters. I would not be in the position I am in without the countless sacrifices they have both made for me.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis analyzes the channels that publicize the Government of British Columbia's transition materials from 2020 and 2022. In particular, the research looks at how transparent, accessible, and accountable the government makes the publication of these materials and compares these findings with the provincial Government of Manitoba and the federal Government of Canada.

The research assesses accountability, transparency, and accessibility features from the perspective of citizens who may have a particular interest in government outcomes, such as representatives of advocacy or nonprofit groups, union representatives, academics in public administration, or employees of independent government offices, like the Office of the Auditor General or the Human Rights Commissioner's Office. Riddell and Haddon (2009, p. 5) argue that a successful transition can be a fundamental prerequisite to a government's successful leadership term. For the purpose of this research, government transitions refer to "the arrival of a new set of hands ready to replace an existing team and exercise levers of power" (Hart & Uhr, 2011, p. 2). The role of the civil service in this process is to prepare briefs on processes, organizational structures, stakeholder relationships, policies, and issues for incoming governments (Riddell & Haddon, 2009, p. 17). Since some politicians are elected to their roles with minimal experience in developing policy, the civil service also plays an essential function in introducing these leaders to their new roles in a general manner (Riddell & Haddon, 2009, p. 64).

The Government of British Columbia's publication of transition binders is an initiative that is in line with the province's open data initiatives. These types of initiatives are valuable because they lead to increased transparency and improved decision-making (Jetzek et. al, 2019, p. 703). British Columbia's Government operates under open data policy to enable citizens to be engaged and connected to government (Ministry of Citizens' Services, 2023).

This thesis analyzes the websites that publicize transition documentation, rather than more general open government websites. For the purpose of this research, these websites can be defined as "the integrated gateway that provides external constituents and internal government personnel with a point of contact for online information" (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 2). Considering the resource capacity and the research expectations for a Masters' thesis, this work examined the differences and similarities between some of the critical transparency, accountability, and accessibility measures related to three of the province's ministry's binders: Health, Infrastructure, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. These ministries were chosen due to their differences in age and presence in multiple jurisdictions.

The research also compares the accessibility, transparency, and accountability of transition binders from the Government of Manitoba's 2021 election and the Government of Canada's 2021 election with the Government of British Columbia's 2022 binders. These particular jurisdictions were chosen because the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada are the only other Canadian jurisdictions with their transition binders officially

released on their websites (Province of Manitoba, 2023; Government of Canada, 2023). From analyzing these jurisdictions, the research was able to view how transparency, accountability, and accessibility practices are implemented when publicizing transition binders in order to empower citizens (Janssen et. al, 2012, p. 261) and connect them to their governments (Ministry of Citizens' Services, 2023). The research reviews the findings through a set of criteria within the overarching pillars of accessibility, transparency, and accountability.

There is no client associated with this thesis.

Background and Issue Statement

Background

Compared to other jurisdictions, only a few authors (Bourgault & Savoie, 1993; Brock, 2015; Cameron & White, 2001; Mau, 2020; Zussman, 2013) have focused on transition planning in Canada, and only three jurisdictions in Canada have publicly available transition information on their websites. In the United States, transition planning is a recognized profession, where experts are trained to successfully transfer power from one leader to another (Zussman, 2012, p. 6). In contrast, Canadian transition processes are relatively private and isolated (Zussman, 2012, p. 7). The lack of Canadian literature on transitions can potentially be attributed to the chaos surrounding elections, employee retention, or because government transitions happen in a relatively short time (Zussman, 2012, p. 8).

Another challenge in pursuing research on government transitions is that transitions have historically been a confidential element of government operations. To illustrate, a staff member of Canada's 1993 election compared being involved in a transition to working in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) (Zussman, 2012, p. 22). Since 1993, the internet has significantly altered how governments manage, deliver services, and communicate to the public. Governments across Canada and worldwide are choosing to publicize different decision-making documents and are increasingly prioritizing values such as transparency to improve overall communication and trust between government and citizens. Now, nearly all member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have made efforts towards transparency through e-government to increase trust between citizens and their governments¹ (Halachmi & Greiling, 2013, p. 563).

The Government of British Columbia is one of the only Canadian jurisdictions that currently makes its transition documents available to the public (see *Exhibits A and B* below for a visual representation of the sites in which the government does so). As of December 2020, the government began to proactively disclose all corporate and ministry transition binders within 90 days of a new cabinet being sworn in (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023). These binders include information such as ministry overviews, written descriptions of issues pertaining to each ministry, lists of key stakeholders, and documents containing

¹ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/process/joining-ogp/open-government-declaration/>

information pertinent to the human resources and financial aspects of ministries; however, different ministries and jurisdictions may not always have the same sections or material as one another (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2021). Jurisdictions and ministries having inconsistent material between one another could pose a potential challenge for those pursuing research in this area, as this variability makes it more challenging for scholars to compare the binders and make assessments as to which materials are included in unpublished binders. Further, it is difficult to understand why ministries or jurisdictions may choose to include different information between one another because finding this information may require communicating with public servants who create these documents.

Exhibit A

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the British Columbia government website. The page title is "Transition binder for a new premier or minister". The breadcrumb navigation is: Home > British Columbians and our governments > Initiatives, plans and strategies > Open Government > Open information > Information released regularly > Transition binder for a new premier or minister.

The page content includes:

- Open Data**
- Open information**
 - Search the catalogue
 - Information released regularly**
 - Briefing notes
 - Calendars
 - Contracts for alternative service delivery
 - Contracts awarded directly to vendors
 - Contracts over \$10,000
 - Estimates notes
 - Gaming grants paid
 - Purchasing card and business transaction account expenses
 - Transition binder for a new premier or minister**
 - Travel expenses
 - Records released by request
 - Request records from government
 - Ministerial directives

Transition binder for a new premier or minister

Last updated: **March 30, 2023**

A transition binder is a package of information prepared for a new premier or minister when they start their role. It includes information like:

- An overview of programs and other government or ministry business
- Advice related to issues and opportunities
- Situations that require a decision
- Information about budget and spending

Transition binders for each ministry are published **90 calendar days** after a new Cabinet is sworn in. They were last updated December 7, 2022.

[Search the catalogue](#)

You can also use this list of bookmarks to find specific sections of transition binders for each ministry.

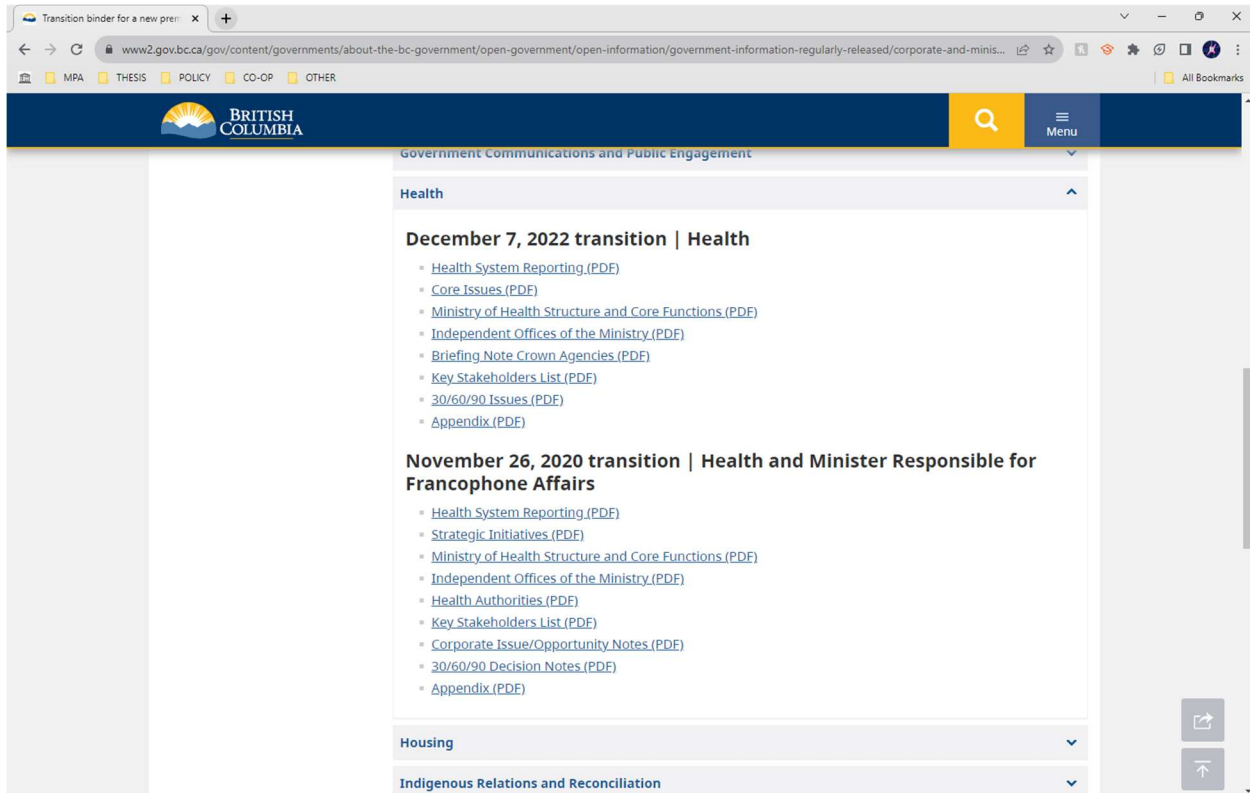
[Expand All](#) | [Collapse All](#)

- [Office of the Premier \(corporate binder\)](#)
- [Agriculture and Food | Agriculture, Food and Fisheries](#)
- [Attorney General | Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing](#)
- [Children and Family Development](#)
- [Citizens' Services](#)

(Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/open-government/open-information/government-information-regularly-released/corporate-and-ministry-transition-binders>

Exhibit B



(Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/open-government/open-information/government-information-regularly-released/corporate-and-ministry-transition-binders>

Issue Statement

Although accountability toward the government can occur through mechanisms such as attending public hearings, joining advisory committees, and participating in public consultations (Kim & Schachter, 2013, p. 459), electoral participation is the primary mechanism for citizens to hold policymakers accountable (Damgaard & Lewis, 2014, p. 258). However, electoral participation alone is not a sufficient mechanism for governments to be held truly accountable (Damgaard & Lewis, 2014, p. 258). For this reason, it is important that decision-making documents such as transition binders are made available to the public because providing citizens with this knowledge gives them the power to be able to scrutinize and hold their elected officials accountable if misdemeanour occurs (Damgaard & Lewis, 2014, p. 259). Though the average citizen may not make use of these efforts, members of groups such as unions or advocacy groups may serve as a vessel for this information to become more accessible (Dokeniya, 2013, p. 18).

According to Carothers and Brechenmacher (2014, n.p.), successful democratic systems rely on core principles of accessibility, transparency, and accountability. Open data initiatives are one of the mechanisms that governments can use to strengthen their transparency, accountability, and citizen accessibility to government information (Janssen et. al, 2012, p. 261). Although open

data initiatives provide value to all citizens (Jetzek et. al, 2019, p. 702) through benefits such as increased citizen trust and the addition of new governmental services for citizens (Janssen et. al, 2012, p. 261), for the purpose of this thesis, the research is conducted from the perspective of citizens who are politically involved and whose work would benefit from the publication of transition binders. For example, members of advocacy groups can analyze transition documents and read the information that ministers are provided in relation to certain issues. If a politician attempts to avoid accountability for an issue because they were unaware, people can openly access transition binders to determine how much they did or did not know about a particular issue. For academics in public administration, having open government policies that encourage initiatives such as the publication of transition documents allows for research to be done to better understand the intricacies of government processes through work such as this thesis.

Governments that make the decision and effort to publicize materials like transition binders face numerous barriers to making them accessible to citizens. The Government of Canada defines accessibility as “creating barrier-free communities, workplaces and services for all” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023). Although Harrison and Savago (2014, p. 513) argue that it is a positive effort for governments to publicize key documents, there are concerns, such as the utility of the publications if citizens have challenges accessing the materials in the first place. For example, some citizens may not have access to a secure internet connection to view the materials. For citizens who may live in rural regions where internet access is not always consistent, or for those who rely on public internet due to financial circumstances, further barriers exist. Additionally, at the start of 2023, 6.2% of Canadians reported not using the internet, translating to approximately 2.39 million people (Kemp, 2023, *Internet use in Canada in 2023*). Other citizens may have access to the technology required to view materials but may have challenges navigating government websites.

Further, democracy relies on transparency to be successful, and consequently, democratic governments are associated with higher levels of transparency (Hollyer et. al, 2011, p. 1202). Government transparency can be defined in many ways, including ‘public affairs being subject to public scrutiny’ or ‘being able to look through the windows of an institution’ (Porumbescu et. al, 2022, p. 11). Information transparency has become an increasingly important topic in the past decade and takes place when “citizens have access to the data and documents that bear upon actions and decisions taken by government actors” (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014, p. 514). In 2013, David Zussman (p. 204) noted that “transition planning continues to take place out of sight”; however, with governments beginning to choose to publicize their transition materials, transition planning is beginning to shift from a private practice to an increasingly public, and inherently, transparent one.

Democracy and accountability go hand in hand, as Christenson and Yamamoto (2023, p. 259) describe accountability as “a virtuous expectation of good governance.” Related to transition documents, accountability can be defined as the ability of citizens to openly view and scrutinize government decision-making documents (Porumbescu et. al, 2022, p. 10). When

documents such as transition binders are made public, they become open for citizens to scrutinize and analyze, creating an additional opportunity for citizens to hold their governments accountable (Martinez & Whitley, 2023, p. e-13-2).

In provinces which may not prioritize the proactive disclosure of government documents such as the Government of Saskatchewan, citizens seeking insight into the internal priorities of a ministry after a new government is elected face limited options to access information from official and trustworthy sources. When governments choose to prioritize initiatives such as publicizing transition documents, citizens become empowered, equipped with knowledge, and enabled to connect with their governments (Ministry of Citizens' Services, 2023). In providing the power to view government decision-making documents, citizens are better able to hold public officials accountable for their actions (Martinez & Whitley, 2023, p. e13-15). Though it can not be guaranteed that citizens make use of initiatives such as the publication of transition binders, these initiatives benefit all citizens through creating equal access to data and enabling citizens to scrutinize data, leading to more transparency and accountability.

Significance of Study and Thesis Goals

The intended contributions resulting from this research are twofold. First, this research hopes to contribute empirically by gaining insight into the publication of government transition documentation on such issues as the ease of finding the binders on government websites, and present potential barriers for users accessing these documents. By pursuing this research, other governments may be able to learn about transition binders and may consider developing processes for taking steps toward transparency and accessibility.

Additionally, this thesis aims to contribute to this field of research by questioning the issues surrounding government decisions on transparency, accountability, and accessibility concerning transition binders. This research is important because it is designed to set the stage for further studies to examine the potential reasoning behind why certain transparency, accessibility, and accountability measures are taken to publicize transition documents, as well as the impacts of these measures.

Scope of Research and Research Question

This study focuses on the Government of British Columbia and compares two sets of British Columbia's transition binders and websites with one set of transition binders and websites in the Governments of Manitoba and Canada. In regard to the ministries, the thesis does not conduct content analysis on the binders themselves. Rather, the research assesses the accessibility in finding the binders, the level of transparency in which each government makes the publication of the binders, and how straightforward it is for citizens to hold their governments accountable, based on indicators within and surrounding the binders. Given the scope of the thesis, this research focused on the accountability metrics of three ministries:

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Infrastructure

- Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation

These ministries were chosen because they are present in all the jurisdictions this thesis researched: British Columbia, Manitoba, and Canada. Additionally, these ministries have different ages, sizes, and responsibilities, giving a unique opportunity to analyze and compare similarities and differences.

In addition, the thesis reviewed accountability in the following ministries in Manitoba:

- Ministry of Health and Seniors' Care
- Ministry of Infrastructure
- Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations

The following ministries within the Government of Canada were also chosen:

- Health Canada
- Infrastructure Canada
- Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Therefore, the central question of this research is:

In what ways does the Government of British Columbia's publication of ministerial transition documents support government transparency, government accountability, and citizen accessibility, compared to the Government of Manitoba's and the Government of Canada's publication of transition documents?

For the purpose of this study, principles and practices related to accessibility, transparency, and accountability can be defined as deliberate efforts made by governments so citizens in different circumstances have access to government documents to best be able to hold government officials accountable if need be. These efforts can be evident in features such as the presence of support for users unfamiliar with the way government websites are set up, the presence of accountability statements, and whether or not websites disclose citizens' digital data that is used.

Positionality Statement

I am an uninvited guest living on traditional Syilx territory born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory. I am a young woman and a first-generation university graduate with an honours degree in political studies and a certificate in business from the University of Saskatchewan. Growing up, I was surrounded by primarily white, conservative, upper-middle-class, and Catholic peers, many of whom were from rural regions originally. I am committed to upholding and learning more about diverse perspectives. As an author, I acknowledge my privilege as an educated, white, Canadian-born, English-speaking, cisgender, and non-disabled person who grew up with financial security and strong family support. I have previous work experience with the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party but am committed to ensuring that political biases do not play a role in this research. I currently live in British Columbia, pursuing a master's degree in

Public Administration, which has provided me with academic knowledge and first-hand experience which may impact my research on the public service. The federal public service is my current employer, though this work does not impact the research within this thesis. I do not take things at face value, and as a result of my upbringing, I am likely to question the systems in power.

Ethical Considerations

The author has successfully completed the *Course on Research Ethics based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Since this thesis involves the use of secondary data as opposed to research involving humans or animals, this thesis does not require submission to an ethics board.

Structure of Thesis

Following this introduction, this thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive literature review of the most relevant sources about Canadian government transitions, government transparency, accountability, and accessibility, and on government web portals. Chapter Three describes the methodology and methods used in developing this research. After this, Chapter Four establishes the primary findings of this study. Chapter Five will continue to describe government transition documents in the context of the Federal Government of Canada and the provincial Government of Manitoba, contrasting the in-depth findings of British Columbia. Chapter Six will analyze the findings in Chapters Four and Five. The thesis concludes by addressing the research gaps in this study and exploring areas for future study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The following chapter provides a traditional or narrative literature review. This type of review summarizes literature on a particular subject and identifies gaps in a research area (Baker, 2016, p. 267). Despite challenges such as the risk of conflicting evidence, this approach was deemed to be the most appropriate means of analyzing the sources relating to this research because of its descriptive results and the ability to obtain a wide range of perspectives on government transitions and transition documents (Baker, 2016, p. 267). The following topics are addressed in this literature review:

- Government transparency, accessibility, and accountability
- Government transitions in the context of public administration
- Web portal functionality from an external perspective

Mapping the Process

Various search streams and databases through the University of Victoria Library search, Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, and the Canadian Public Policy Collection were used to find literature suitable to this topic. This literature review primarily examined academic journals, books, and alternative sources such as the transcript of a speech.

The following search terms were used in preparing this review:

Transparency in Government and the Public Service

- "advocacy groups and government transparency"
- "government" and "transparency"
- "canadian government transparency efforts"
- "government transparency efforts"
- "open government"

Research on Government Transitions in the Context of Public Administration

- "incoming" OR "elected," "deputy minister" OR "civil servant" OR "public servant."
- "government transitions," both alone, and excluding the word "carbon."
- "government transition documents."
- Sources which cited David Zussman's *Off and Running* (2013)
- References used in *Off and Running* (Zussman, 2013)
- References used in *How Power Changes Hands: Transition and Succession in Government* (Hart & Uhr, 2011)

Web Portal Functionality from an External Perspective

- Sources which cited Web portal functionality and state government e-service (Gant & Gant, 2002)

Government Transparency, Accessibility, and Accountability

Transparency in government is an essential and emerging element of governance and public administration scholarship. A quote that depicts the current state and pressures of transparency in the context of Canadian governments is: “Governments in Canada are facing increasing pressure to conform to two relatively new approaches to government data and information: proactive disclosure and open data” (Conroy & Scassa, 2015, p. 176). Public administration literature defines transparency in different ways. Rather than provide one singular definition, *Government Transparency: State of Art and New Perspectives* identifies five key elements of government transparency: availability, information, the organization, and external actors (Porumbescu et al., 2022, p. 12).

Taking government transparency further, it is important to recognize open data and information transparency. Conroy and Scassa (2015, p. 178) describe open data as an element of open government, which can be achieved by proactively disclosing information. Dokeniya (2013, p. 17) states that “making information publicly available through openness initiatives is the beginning, not the end, of a results chain that links openness to better governance and development outcomes”. However, the author criticizes that even when governments provide open data, many topics may remain unaccountable and lack transparency (Dokeniya, 2013, p. 17). Another criticism surrounding government transparency is that transparency efforts “achieve little if the political system does not create the incentives for officials to be sanctioned when corruption is exposed.” (Dokeniya, 2013, p. 18).

Web-accessibility argues for the importance of barrier-free government websites (Mitsamarn et. al, 2007). McDonald et. al (2011, p. 837) discuss e-government accessibility in terms of language by assessing the number of language options different American counties offer on their websites. Additionally, Mohammad (2020, p. 78) writes that e-government systems ought to remain flexible and accessible to ensure user satisfaction.

Next, *The Oxford Handbook of Accountability* defines accountability as “the degree in which citizens can oblige an official to justify their conduct and apply consequences” (Damgaard & Lewis, 2014, p. 260). Aucoin and Jarvis (2005, p. 37) attribute public management success to governments implementing instruments to make accountability a core element of leadership, such as public access to government information and “protection for officials who release information as an ethical response to an undisclosed wrongdoing”. Damgaard and Lewis (2014, p. 259) criticize the idea that citizens are able to be informed and have their information gathered but do not have the ability to have their perspectives taken into serious consideration by governments. Waterman (2014, p. 217) argues that accountability in governance serves three purposes: to control the abuse of public authority, provide assurance for the use of public resources, and to promote improvement in public management.

Research on Government Transitions in the Context of Public Administration

One of the most notable scholarly resources focusing on government transitions from a Canadian perspective is the book *Off and Running*, written by David Zussman in 2013. Zussman has twice led federal transition teams and uses his experience and knowledge to guide the book, in addition to interviewing select senior public servants (Brock, 2015, p. 27). This book provides a comprehensive overview of the transition process in a Canadian context, including chapters which describe each phase of the transition process (Zussman, 2013). Though this book provides detailed chapters on many of the critical aspects of Canadian government transitions, the book being published ten years ago may indicate room for further analysis in this subject area. There have been several changes to government systems in Canadian and global contexts, as well as the study of public administration within the last ten years, and it stands to reason that there is room for further, modern research in this area. For example, governments are experiencing greater trends towards more openness and transparency, as well as the pressure to modernize their operations using the internet, digital platforms, and other tools (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2020, p. 334).

Zussman's book *Off and Running* contains writing specifically on transition documents. Zussman emphasizes the importance of these documents, stating that the short-term objective of a transition from the perspective of a public servant is to "provide compelling information and honest advice to their Minister" (Zussman, 2013, p. 118), with a primary vehicle of this advice being transition binders. Within these writings, Zussman also describes what to expect in a typical transition binder while stating the challenge in summarizing the complete range of briefing materials provided to Ministers (Zussman, 2013, p. 119). This challenge is partially because "in the transition world, briefing notes is an oxymoron- these materials are not brief or in note form" (Zussman, 2013, p. 119). Another challenge in developing transition briefing materials is "balancing the desire to provide as much information as possible to the minister during the early transition period while recognizing that the minister is exhausted from... an election campaign, with... a limited ability to absorb new material" (Zussman, 2013, p. 121).

Within these binders are a wide variety of materials ranging from the function of a ministry, possibilities of different initiatives to take, financial data, statutory roles, accountability levels within the ministry, performance reviews, and department priorities and plans (Zussman, 2013, p. 120). Additional materials may include urgent matters, what the Minister may be required to do in their first 100-150 days of office, and key ministry stakeholders (Zussman, 2013, p. 120). If additional information is required, specific ministry departments may produce their own briefings for the Minister, and if the Minister is particularly new to a role in government, they may receive a briefing on how government works (Zussman, 2013, p. 121). Complementing Zussman's work is *Cycling into Saigon* (Cameron & White, 2001), which focuses on government transitions through a provincial perspective, particularly focusing on Ontario's 1985 and 1990 transitions. These writings are noteworthy because they are some of the only scholarly works to specifically discuss government transition documents in a Canadian

context. For this reason, it is challenging to find alternative supporting or opposing literature on transition documents.

Another significant body of work focusing on government transitions is *How Power Changes Hands*, written by Hart and Uhr in 2011. As an Australian study, this book speaks on the value of government transitions in democratic regimes and establishes critical terms within this area of public administration (Hart & Uhr, 2011, pp. 1-6). Further, different authors use a variety of case studies to analyze different elements of government transitions from a political science perspective, including through elements such as historical context in their analysis (Hart & Uhr, 2011, p. 3). Nevertheless, this book focuses on transitions from an external, political perspective, as opposed to an internal, public administration perspective, and does not contain elements which focus on transition binders and other documentation.

Notably, besides *Off and Running*, there are relatively few scholarly articles written on political transitions and the relationship between civil servants and elected politicians in a Canadian context, a fact which is made apparent in *Public Sector Leadership*, when Mau (2020, p. 140) writes that "There are many opportunities for them [Canadian public administration scholars] to advance this frontier of knowledge," referring to research in public administration leadership studies. Zussman also writes that "it is surprising that there is so little academic... interest in the details of transition planning" and illustrates this sentiment by stating that the majority of the most popular Canadian political science textbooks only reference government transitions in passing (Zussman, 2013, p. 221). Additionally, in a review of *Off and Running* published two years after the book, Brock (2015, p. 27) states, "the only other major sources on government transitions in Canada are an edition of collected essays from 1993 and a recent award-winning book on Ontario politics". The 1993 collection of essays that Brock refers to is titled *Taking Power: Managing Government Transitions*, which features several chapters that focus on Canadian government transitions from a provincial perspective (Bourgault & Savoie, 1993). Uhr and Hart (2011, p. 9) also echo these sentiments by stating that "there is surprisingly little systematic research on the dynamics of power transitions associated with the arrivals and departures of... governments in contemporary political systems". Additionally, James Walter (2011, p. 37) writes that literature on presidential government transitions is more abundant than prime ministerial government transitions. Despite the relative lack of recent Canadian literature on government transitions, there are more scholarly resources in the context of the United States (Weiner & Lau, 2020), Australia (Hart & Uhr, 2011), and the United Kingdom than in Canada (Riddell & Haddon, 2009). Further, some authors choose to write on transitions in Westminster democracies as a whole (Dowding & Taflaga, 2020).

Many articles also affirm the importance of pursuing further research in public administration leadership development in a general context. For example, one article stated that "the study of public sector leadership is... crucial in the public sector because progress in political leadership depends on the bureaucrats who implement government policies" (Masud & Hossain, 2021, p. 181). The recent publication of transition documents allows the public to see

parts of what this leadership entails. Althaus and Vakil also allude to these sentiments by stating that the political side of political transitions has received attention, but the public service side of this process is yet to be spoken of (Althaus & Vakil, 2013, p. 478).

Under the status quo, the public does not know if their government's transition processes are efficient and effective and further, they do not have any indicators of what a successful transition looks like. Though successful transitions can be measured in many ways, Riddell and Haddon consider a successful transition to be how quickly a new government can "get to grips with office and implement its plans" (Riddell & Haddon, 2009, p. 4). If citizens know how successful transitions can be measured, more value is provided to released transition materials.

Web Portal Functionality from an External Perspective

Studying government web portal features is an emerging topic in recent literature, supplemented by an array of work ranging from diverse regions, focuses, and lenses. Due to an increased presence of government activities on internet platforms, many researchers have chosen to write about government websites from a citizen perspective. For example, Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2020) discuss e-government and open government through the context of the judicial system in Mexico. The authors explain that "little is known about the structure, usability, content, and impacts" of the websites that judicial branches have begun to provide information on (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2020, p. 335). The article also writes about the intersection between concepts such as open government and open justice, with concepts like transparency, participation, and collaboration (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2020). In analyzing their findings, Sandoval and Gil-Garcia (2020, p. 337) used internet research through an evolutionary perspective, analyzing e-government initiatives according to the characteristics and features in different stages.

Next, Gant and Gant (2002, p. 2) study government web portals in the context of the United States at a state-level through the lens of criteria that fit in the key pillars of usability, customization, openness, and transparency. The authors describe governments beginning to use the internet to improve service delivery, and how e-government has enabled citizens to access government documents and further engage citizens in democracy (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 2). Although this study was published in 2002 during a time when many governments did not make use of the full potential of the internet, many of the criteria that the authors use in this study remain valuable to this day.

Becker (2004, p. 11) takes an alternate approach to analyzing government web resources by choosing to focus on one type of citizen requirement: visual accessibility for older adult users. The author points out that the over-aged-60 population is one of the largest groups to benefit from online access to government services and criticizes how government websites often do not accommodate to the needs of their user bases (Becker, 2004, p. 11).

Martinez and Whitley (2023) research government websites by studying transparency data and the use of open data as an anti-corruption tool. The authors use a case study approach,

with the Brazilian Federal Government as a case, in order to assess the quality of the data produced and published by the government (Martinez & Whitley, 2023, p. e13-2). The article concludes with lessons learned, including finding that society is only given some insight into the data creation process, and that fully formal and transparent mechanisms allow for the publication of government data to be used to combat corruption (Martinez & Whitley, 2023, pp. e13-17-e13-18).

Lastly, Anthopoulos, Siozos, and Tsoukalas (2007, p. 354) write about the service-oriented nature of e-government projects and how plans to develop government sites are often focused on cost and time savings, as opposed to ensuring that citizens are able to participate in initiatives. Using research conducted in Greece, the article promotes governments adapting to a bottom-up design in e-government project development as an effort for these sites to become more participatory at the citizen level (Anthopoulos et. al, 2007, p. 354).

In conclusion, much of the work in this area focuses on improvements to be made in government web portals. The majority of the articles written criticize the subjects of their study through different lenses, such as accessibility (Becker, 2004); usability, customization, openness, and transparency (Gant & Gant, 2002), or the misguided priorities when creating web portals (Anthopoulos et. al, 2007). Other scholars, such as Martinez and Whitley (2023), focus on the potential of government websites, but few write about government websites from a positive and non-critical perspective.

Literature Review Summary

In summary, though much of the work that has been done on government transitions emphasizes that further research ought to be done on this topic, there is still a selection of high-quality literature that provides insight into the process of government transitions. This section has described the research process pursued to collect notable literature on government transitions in Canada and other similar democracies. The literature within this review is critical to understanding the basis of current knowledge and practice within government transitions, as well as relevant themes in government transparency, accessibility, and accountability. The review also covered a series of works that address a citizen's perspective of government websites. This review acknowledges gaps in the literature, such as a lack of transition documents in a Canadian provincial context, a lack of government transparency, accessibility, and accountability measurement in the context of transition binders, and a lack of web portal analysis that focuses on transition binders; and hopes that this thesis will be an important contribution to this collection of work.

In *Figure 1* below, two of the major topics discussed in this literature review are linked to the research question of this thesis. However, the review's third topic, Web Portal Functionality from an External Perspective, supports and guides the thesis' research by providing examples of potential frameworks to conduct this research.

Figure 1: Research Question and Literature Review Themes

Literature Review Topic	Research Question
Government Transparency, Accessibility, and Accountability Government transitions in the context of public administration	In what ways does the Government of British Columbia’s publication of ministerial transition documents support government transparency, government accountability, and citizen accessibility, compared to the Government of Manitoba’s and the Government of Canada’s publication of transition documents?

Conceptual Framework

The accessibility component of the framework outlines a series of accessibility concerns for citizens attempting to access transition binders, as well as correlated solutions alongside each concern. When users have great ease in accessing and navigating the government sites they search, a portal has high usability, which correlates to higher levels of accessibility (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 2). It is critical that states be mindful of the varied needs of their citizens and accommodate these needs to ensure that anyone can access the information they wish to (Gant & Gant, 2022, p. 2). Gant and Gant (2002, p. 3) write about the importance of digital literacy and web-savviness of citizens, which is why the requirement to download, support for new users, and requiring minimal clicks to access documentation were established as critical accessibility features to look out for in government sites. Additionally contributing to a document’s accessibility is the number of languages the document is available to read in (McDonald et. al, 2011, p. 837). Prioritizing this initiative is becoming increasingly important because the Government of Canada’s 2021 census revealed that 12.7% of Canadians predominantly speak a language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Gant and Gant (2002, p. 1) also outline a series of valuable transparency issues and solutions when accessing government portals. For example, those accessing information through government websites should be able to leave with some form of proof that they accessed the site at a certain point in time (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 6). Without this accountability measure, users lack a form of defence if governments were to remove or alter binders on their portals. For this reason, this was acknowledged as a transparency concern while moving forward in this research. The authors also affirm the importance of including a security statement that describes a government’s cybersecurity policies in e-government portals (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 6). In order for a government to demonstrate true transparency, it ought to be transparent about the way that the websites use citizen data. *Web Portal Functionality and State Government E-service* also describes the value of government objectivity, utilizing if a government site was free of advertising as a factor to measure this (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 6). When a government does not advertise external companies, users can trust that their data stays internal to government and that

the government entity is not subject to external bias. Lastly, one of the challenges surrounding the transparency of government web portals is the ease in which users can access the information they seek (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 4). For this reason, user-friendly search tools were included in the framework as a valuable transparency solution.

Finally, Gant and Gant (2002, p. 3) state the importance of including information such as key contacts in government web portals in order for users to trust the content they read. For this reason, the inclusion of ministry-specific contact information and binder author information as accountability solutions were included in the accountability section of the conceptual framework. If users have contacts to whom they can credit documentation to, more validity is provided to said document, making it easier for accountability measures to be taken. As an extension of these efforts, a concern related to accountability may be related to whether users feel comfortable contacting government representatives with their concerns in relation to these materials. To address this concern and enhance the presence of a government’s accountability priorities would be to include a clear statement that urges citizens to contact with questions. Since accountability through e-government is a relatively emerging concept (Alcaraz-Quiles et. al, 2018, p. v), it is important for governments to declare boundaries that suggest appropriate mechanisms for citizens to contact officials.

Find below, three tables, each dedicated to a pillar of this research, that support this thesis’ conceptual framework.

Figure 2: Four Accessibility Concerns and Solutions

Accessibility Concern	Accessibility Solution
Lack of reliable internet or devices, particularly amongst low-income and rural-located citizens	Not requiring citizens to download documents to view them
Complicated interface, making it challenging for citizens to find the documents they need	Requiring minimal clicks required to access binder
Lack of digital skills among citizens, particularly in older generations	Support for new users, in the form of education, a webpage dedicated to questions, or a call center
Citizens with a language barrier, wishing to access government documents	Making documents available to read in multiple languages

Figure 3: Four Transparency Concerns and Solutions

Transparency Concern	Transparency Solution
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Nothing to show when users access a webpage, making it more challenging for citizens to prove access at a certain point	Receipt/certification to prove users enter page
Concerns surrounding the government's use of citizens' private data, not knowing what digital data is being collected	Security statement present
Distrust surrounding government transactions, privacy concerns surrounding personal data and advertisements	Lack of advertisements on government site
Lack of ease surrounding finding material on a specific topic or period among many documents	User-friendly search tools

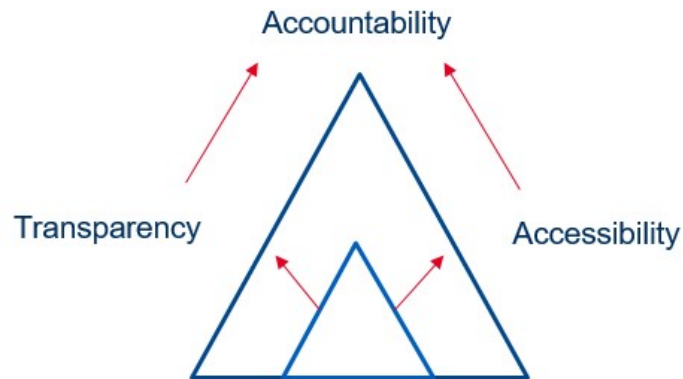
Figure 4: Five Accountability Concerns and Solutions

Accountability Concern	Accountability Solution
Citizens wishing to contact government representatives to voice concerns or ask questions	Include ministry-specific contact information
Reading a transition binder (or other document) and being unsure about who contributed to the work	Include author information in documents
Governments making it challenging for users to contact them with questions	Explicit statement urging citizens to come forward with questions and concerns
Citizens being unaware of their rights when it comes to accessing government information	Included statement that outlines rights of citizens and government access to information policies
Citizens being unsure who to blame or credit if something goes wrong	Included accountability statement, affirming which person citizens are able to hold to account if need be

Conclusion: Guiding Conceptual Framework

Figure 5 (see below) is a visual representation of the framework that guides this thesis. The three core pillars of this research: transparency, accessibility, and accountability are represented as a triangle.

Figure 5: Conceptual Framework



The rationale for this figure is as follows. First, transparency as a pillar serves as half of the base of the framework, supported by the literature review and previously outlined table of concerns and solutions. Accessibility serves as the other side of the base of the framework, also supported by the literature review and associated table of concerns and solutions. Transparency and accessibility support one another, and in doing so, also support accountability. Accountability is represented as the top of the framework, because when jurisdictions prioritize transparency and accessibility, accountability inherently becomes more feasible for citizens to exercise.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter addresses the research methodology and methods used in this study. This section also addresses the data collection methods in the thesis and the criteria for conducting this research. This section will provide a foundation for readers to understand the research process in this thesis before reading the research and findings in the upcoming chapters.

Methodology

The methodology used within this thesis is a multiple case study approach. The websites that publicize government transition binders serve as the cases in this research, including the Government of British Columbia, the Government of Manitoba, and the Government of Canada, with some additional findings included in the binders. By choosing to analyze varied ministry's binders, the research was able to question if differences and similarities exist based on factors such as the jurisdiction they are from.

A multiple case study approach pushed the research to delve deeply into the websites this thesis chose to analyze, allowing for the research to bring new variables to light and develop a better understanding of the publication of transition documents (O'Leary, 2021, p. 227 and Mills et. al, 2010, *Multiple Case Designs*). The cases chosen in this study were similar in that they are all Canadian jurisdictions that publish their transition binders, which allowed for the research to analyze findings across these cases (Mills et. al, 2010, *Multiple Case Designs*).

Methods and Tasks

The primary data collection tool used in this thesis was document review through the form of analyzing the digital surroundings of the chosen governments' transition binders while making note of certain aspects of the binders themselves. Document review refers to "analysis of documents that contains information about the scenario or event under consideration" and "is used to investigate, categorize and analyze physical sources... in the social, public or digital world" (Think Design, 2020, *Document Research*). In turn, thoroughly analyzing, comparing, and reviewing these government documents and websites helped to create meaning and answer this thesis' research question. These benefits were applied to this research because the thesis ultimately produced detailed descriptions of the phenomenon: the publicization of different government transition binders.

This research used binders available on the Government of British Columbia's website, the Government of Manitoba's website, and the Government of Canada's website. Much of the research involved analyzing these government's websites and the support systems for citizens to look at other factors that imply a government's priorities in transparency, accessibility, and accountability. For example, if a government includes statements related to how it utilizes government information, support mechanisms for users who may not be familiar with navigating

government websites or contact information for citizens to ask questions regarding the content of a document; the government reflects priorities of making its website citizen and user-friendly. Analyzing elements of the setting of the binders on their government website, this thesis made inferences based on the core principles of transparency, accountability, and accessibility, as found in the relevant literature.

Data Collection

This research collected data by viewing a series of government websites, in addition to external links included on the websites, all listed in *Appendix A*. In order to access these websites, the researcher used a search engine search that included the name of the jurisdiction followed by transition binders (e.g. “British Columbia transition binders”). From this point, the research made note of the amount of clicks it took to get from this search to the binder itself. Afterwards, the research searched the digital location of the transition binders with the thesis’ predetermined criteria in mind. The Government of Canada publicizes its binders on individual ministry websites, as opposed to in a central transition binder website used in British Columbia and Manitoba. Next, the criteria within the pillars of accessibility and transparency largely involved analyzing and searching the jurisdictions’ websites, as well as additional material on the websites, such as links at the bottom of webpages, with titles such as accessibility. The criteria within the pillar of accountability involved analysis of both the website itself, as well as ministry-specific factors which could be found in the binders.

In order to determine how transparent, accessible, and accountable government websites and transition binders were, this thesis collected data in terms of many of the criteria found in Web portal functionality and state government e-service, written by Gant and Gant (2002) and further described in the conceptual framework in *Figures 2-5*.

The criteria for comparing transition materials were the following:

- Accessibility
 - Download required
 - Number of clicks required to access binder
 - Presence of training/a help link/call center support available for new users
 - Number of languages available to read the document in
- Transparency
 - Receipt/certification to prove you have accessed the page
 - Presence of advertisements
 - Security statement present
 - Search tools
- Accountability
 - Contact information
 - Authors present
 - Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out

- Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies
- Presence of accountability statement

Data Analysis

The data analysis conducted in this thesis was an assessment of web portals in terms of criteria fitting into the pillars of transparency, accessibility, and accountability. By making note of the materials and features included and not included in each of the jurisdictions' websites included in this study, the research was able to note different jurisdictions and ministries including varied materials. Further, by analyzing the publicized materials of these jurisdictions, the research could evaluate and make inferences about how different jurisdictions view and value government transparency. The benefits of this method of data analysis allowed for the thesis's research to find similarities and differences by ministry and jurisdiction. The research used a pre-determined set of criteria to analyze the data, supplemented by three key pillars: accessibility, transparency, and accountability. Under each pillar is a set of criteria (explained in *Figures 2-5*), supplemented partly by resources like Web Portal Functionality and State Government E-service (Gant & Gant, 2002, pp. 5-6). This thesis used many elements of Gant and Gant's framework and assessed web portal functionality similarly to these authors, but in a different context. Based on these criteria, the thesis determined which factors were an indication of transparency, accessibility, or accountability. These indicators are described below.

Accessibility

For the first accessibility criteria, *Download required*, jurisdictions that did not require citizens to download the transition binders were marked as having met the criteria and instead provided the binders on the webpage directly. If a jurisdiction met these requirements, they were marked with the colour green in *Figure 21* in Chapter Six. If a jurisdiction did not meet this criteria, it was marked with the colour red in this figure.

For the second accessibility criteria, *Number of clicks required to access binder*, jurisdictions met this expectation if it took a minimal number of clicks to access the binder. This criteria was met if users could access a binder by making three clicks after searching for it on a search engine. Jurisdictions with three clicks or less were marked by the colour green in *Figure 21*, or red for requiring more than three clicks.

In order to assess the *Presence of training/a help link/call center support available for new users*, the research deemed a jurisdiction as meeting this criteria if support was available directly on the webpage, partially meeting if support was available on an additional link, and red if a jurisdiction did not provide support in a visible manner on the page. Meeting this criteria is indicated by the colour green in *Figure 21*, while partially meeting the criteria is represented by the colour yellow, and red indicates having not met this criteria.

Jurisdictions met the criteria of *Number of languages available to read the document in* by providing more than one language to read the document in. Jurisdictions that met this criteria

are marked with the colour green in *Figure 21*, while those who provide documents in one language are marked with the colour red.

Transparency

The research involved going to each transition binder webpage and seeing if a receipt or other form of certification could be provided to users who access transition binders. A jurisdiction met this criteria if it provided this type of certification and did not meet this criteria if this was not provided to users. Positive results are marked with the colour green in *Figure 22*, while negative results are marked with the colour red.

If a jurisdiction included advertisements on its website, they were marked as having not met this transparency criteria, with the colour red in *Figure 22*. For jurisdictions who did not include advertisements on their websites, they were marked as meeting the criteria with the colour green in *Figure 22*.

If a jurisdiction included a security statement on its transition binder site, they were marked as having met this criteria (and with the colour green in *Figure 22*). In contrast, including this information on a link on the webpage, was marked as partially meeting this criteria (with the colour yellow in *Figure 22*). If the jurisdiction did not include any information or links to this information on its transition binder webpage, it was marked as not fulfilling this criteria (with the colour red in *Figure 22*).

If users could use a search tool to find the information they seek, the jurisdiction met this predetermined criteria. If a jurisdiction provided a different type of feature to assist in users in finding their information, they were marked as partially meeting the criteria. For jurisdictions that did not provide any search feature to help users find their information, they were marked as not meeting this criteria. In *Figure 22*, meeting the criteria is reflected by the colour green, partially meeting the criteria is reflected by the colour yellow, and not meeting this criteria is reflected by the colour red.

Accountability

If a jurisdiction included ministry-specific contact information in its binders, it would be marked as meeting this criteria (and with the colour green in *Figure 23*). If general contact information was included in a central location, jurisdictions were marked as partially meeting the criteria (and with the colour yellow in *Figure 23*). If no contact information was present, the jurisdiction was marked as not meeting this criteria (with the colour red in *Figure 23*).

The research granted a jurisdiction as meeting the criteria of *Authors present* if the binders' author was present within the binder. This criteria was classified as unmet if the binders did not include authors. Positive results are marked with the colour green in *Figure 23* and negative results are marked with the colour red.

If a jurisdiction included a statement that encouraged users with questions to reach out, it was deemed meeting this criteria (indicated by the colour green in *Figure 23*). If a jurisdiction

included a statement that questioned if users received the information they were looking for but did not explicitly encourage users to come forward with questions, it was marked as having partially met the criteria (indicated by the colour yellow in *Figure 23*). A jurisdiction did not meet the criteria if no relating statement was included on its site (and marked by the colour red in *Figure 23*).

Jurisdictions that included a statement with the rights of citizens and access to information policies on their transition binder webpage were marked as meeting this criteria (with the colour green in *Figure 23*). Those that did not include a statement like this on their webpage were marked as not meeting this criteria (with the colour red in *Figure 23*).

If a ministry included an accountability statement within its binder, the ministry was deemed as meeting the criteria (and marked by the colour green in *Figure 23*). If a jurisdiction included a general accountability statement on its primary transition binder webpage, it was marked as partially meeting this criteria (and reflected by using the colour yellow in *Figure 23*). If a jurisdiction did not include either of these, it was marked as not meeting this criteria (and highlighted with the colour red in *Figure 23*).

Strengths and Limitations

Limitations

One of the limitations of this thesis is that the research is not representative of all provinces. By only researching British Columbia, Manitoba, and the federal government, the thesis did not analyze other jurisdictions. Therefore, this only provided a minor view into what government transition documents look like in a Canadian context. To pursue holistic research findings, an effort was made to note where British Columbia stands compared to Manitoba and Canada, with Chapter Five solely reflecting these comparisons.

Further, the research was not sufficiently able to describe employees' experiences of employees in each ministry. Communicating and interviewing employees who have worked to build government transition binders or other public servants who have worked to support government transparency, accountability, and accessibility would have provided increased supplementary research to this thesis, but due to the effort and scope of a graduate thesis, these efforts were not possible for this research. Further, since government organizations are vast and diverse, the study may neglect a substantial amount of data in unaccounted-for ministries. Since all these factors fall within the scope of this study, they do not necessarily limit the intended purpose of this research.

Strengths

One of the potential strengths of this research was that pursuing this work supported an area of Canadian public administration studies that is lacking. Additionally, since this research used an assessment of web portals, there were inherent advantages of around-the-clock availability of information, as well as time and cost-effectiveness (Think Design, 2020,

Advantages of Document Research). Therefore, the thesis could be completed with minimal time conflicts, such as coordinating schedules with research participants. Further, the use of a multiple case study approach allowed for the research to examine issues across cases, allowing for a strong test of theory and more comprehensive explanations of the subjects (Mills et. al, 2010, *Multiple Case Designs*).

Lastly, this research reviewed relatively recent documents from 2021 and 2022, which are cases relatively new to the field of public administration research. Since there is currently a relative lack of academic resources that describe government transition documents in a Canadian context, pursuing this research will build upon the work of scholars such as Zussman (2019) and Althaus & Vakil (2013), and ideally, public administration scholars and professionals will better understand current government transition materials in a Canadian context.

Chapter 4: Findings in British Columbia

Introduction and Main Themes

The following chapter will use the research criteria outlined in Chapter Three. First, the chapter will review the Government of British Columbia’s general website structure through the criteria for accessibility and transparency. These pillars analyze the government’s website as opposed to each of the ministry’s binders themselves because much of the outlined criteria of these pillars is not available to be found in the binders. Next, the chapter will move towards a binder-specific section, with accountability features being analyzed in ministry’s binders: Health, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

British Columbia

Figure 6 provides a summary of information on the Government of British Columbia’s transition binder website in terms of accessibility criteria, such as if a download is required to access the binders, the number of clicks required to access the binder, the presence of support for site visitors, and the number of languages available to read the binders in. Further analysis of these findings is provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 6: British Columbia Accessibility

Criteria	British Columbia Website
Download required	Yes
Number of clicks required to access binder	Three
Presence of training/a help link/call center support available for new users present on the page	Yes, a toll-free phone number, an email and address, and a link to a webpage; all offer support accessing government records. Additionally, an accessibility tab at the bottom of the page with accessibility supports and services, an accessibility and inclusion toolkit, accessibility policy and guidelines, and accessibility contact and feedback.
Number of languages available to read the document in	One: English

(Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023)

Figure 7 provides a summary of information on the Government of British Columbia’s transition binder website in terms of transparency, using criteria such as providing proof that users accessed the page, and if there are advertisements present on the page. Further analysis on these findings is provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 7: British Columbia Transparency

Criteria	British Columbia Website
Receipt/certification to prove you have accessed the page	No
Presence of advertisements	No
Security statement present	Yes, a Privacy tab is present at the bottom of the page. When clicked, there is a B.C. Government Website Privacy Statement which defines ‘personal information,’ the scope of the statement, how a user’s information is collected, the information that is collected, the purpose for collecting this information, how to opt out of having information collected, the safeguards that are in place to protect a user’s personal information, how long information is retained, how to access and correct a user’s submitted information, and an email address to contact for more information.
Search tools	Yes, a “search the catalogue” feature

(Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Ministry of Health

Figure 8 provides a summary of accountability findings in British Columbia’s Ministry of Health transition binders from 2020 and 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 8: British Columbia Ministry of Health 2020 and 2022 Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	2020	2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central transition binder webpage	Yes, there is a Ministry of Health mailing address, two phone numbers, and a webpage link on page four.
Authors present	No	No

Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but in a link at the bottom of the central transition binder webpage
Presence of an accountability statement	Yes, on page four, the Honourable Adrian Dix states that the service plan was prepared under his direction and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.	Yes, on page five, the Honourable Adrian Dix states that the service plan was prepared under his direction and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.

(British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2022) (British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2020) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Figure 9 provides a summary of accountability findings in British Columbia’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure transition binders from 2020 and 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings are included in Chapter Six.

Figure 9: British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure 2020 and 2022 Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	2020	2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central transition binder webpage	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central transition binder webpage
Authors present	No	No

Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the central transition binder webpage
Presence of an accountability statement	No	No

(British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, 2022) (British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, 2020) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023)

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Figure 10 provides a summary of accountability findings in British Columbia’s Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation transition binders from 2020 and 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binder’s author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 10: British Columbia Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation 2020 and 2022 Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	2020	2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central transition binder webpage	Yes, on page six, there is a Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation mailing address, a phone number, and a webpage link
Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the central transition binder webpage	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the central transition binder webpage
Presence of an accountability statement	No	Yes, on page seven, the Honourable Murray Rankin states that the service plan

		<p>was prepared under his direction, and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.</p> <p>Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.</p>
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(British Columbia Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2022) (British Columbia Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2020) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the key findings in the publication of three of the Government of British Columbia’s ministerial transition binders. By the end of this chapter, readers should have a base-level understanding of how the government of British Columbia meets certain accessibility and transparency criteria. Chapter Seven will analyze these findings through the context of the Government of Manitoba and the Government of Canada through similar ministries.

Chapter 5: Findings in the Government of Manitoba’s Transition Binders and the Government of Canada’s Transition Binders

Introduction

Of all the Canadian provinces and territories, British Columbia is only one of two provincial jurisdictions releasing transition binders, the other being Manitoba (British Columbia, n.d. & Government of Manitoba, n.d.). At the federal level, the Government of Canada releases their transition binders (Government of Canada, 2023). This provides a unique research opportunity, as recent efforts towards a more transparent government allow for the analysis of historically private documents. The following chapter will analyze to what extent these jurisdictions are transparent, accessible, and accountable in publicizing their transition binders.

This chapter will follow a similar format to Chapter Four. First, the chapter will review the Government of Manitoba’s general website setup through the criteria within the pillars of accessibility and transparency. Similar to Chapter Four, these pillars analyze the government’s website as opposed to each of the ministry’s binders themselves because much of the outlined criteria of these pillars is not available to be found in the binders. Next, the chapter will move towards a binder-specific section, with accountability features being analyzed in each of the ministry’s binders: Health and Senior’s Care, Infrastructure, and Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations. After analyzing this set of criteria in Manitoba, the chapter will follow the same formatting standard in the Government of Canada. First, tables will analyze Canada’s accessibility and transparency criteria; then accountability tables will analyze Health Canada, Infrastructure Canada, and Crown-Indigenous Relations Canada. Each table in this chapter will contain British Columbia’s 2022 findings alongside Manitoba’s and Canada’s.

Manitoba

Figure 11 provides a summary of information on the Government of Manitoba’s transition binder website in terms of accessibility criteria, such as if a download is required to access the binders, the number of clicks required to access the binder, the presence of support for site visitors, and the number of languages available to read the binders in. Alongside Manitoba’s findings is a column with British Columbia’s findings for comparison. Further analysis on these findings is provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 11: Government of Manitoba Accessibility Compared to Government of British Columbia Accessibility

Criteria	Manitoba	BC
Download required	Yes	Yes
Number of clicks to access binder	Five	Three

Presence of training/a help link/call center support available for new users present on the page	No, though there is an accessibility tab at the bottom of the web page. When clicked, the government describes its commitment to accessibility, including a separate link to <i>The Accessibility for Manitobans Act</i> . There is an additional link with tips for enhancing the accessibility of the website. Information is also on the <i>Manitoba Government Accessibility Plan</i> and the Manitoba Government Accessibility Steering Committee. There are also contact options through email, toll-free phone, and fax to provide feedback and request accessibility accommodations.	Yes, a toll-free phone number, an email and address, and a link to a webpage; all offer support accessing government records. Additionally, an accessibility tab at the bottom of the page with accessibility supports and services, an accessibility and inclusion toolkit, accessibility policy and guidelines, and accessibility contact and feedback.
Number of languages available to read the document in	One, English	One, English

(Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Province of Manitoba | Accessibility, n.d.) (Province of Manitoba | Info MB, n.d.)

Figure 12 provides a summary of information on the Government of Manitoba’s transition binder website in terms of transparency, using criteria such as providing proof that users accessed the page, if there are advertisements present on the page, and if there are search tools. Alongside these findings is a column with British Columbia’s findings for comparison. Further analysis on these findings is provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 12: Government of Manitoba Transparency compared to Government of British Columbia Transparency

Criteria	Manitoba	BC
Receipt/certification to prove you have accessed the page	No	No

Presence of advertisements	No	No
Security statement present	Yes, at the bottom of the webpage are links with Privacy, Copyright, and Disclaimer headings.	Yes, a Privacy tab is present at the bottom of the page. When clicked, there is a B.C. Government Website Privacy Statement which defines ‘personal information,’ the scope of the statement, how a user’s information is collected, the information that is collected, the purpose for collecting this information, how to opt out of having information collected, the safeguards that are in place to protect a user’s personal information, how long information is retained, how to access and correct a user’s submitted information, and an email address to contact for more information.
Search tools	No, but there are drop-down options	Yes, a “search the catalogue” feature

(Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Province of Manitoba | Info MB, n.d.) (*Province of Manitoba | Privacy Notification*, n.d.)

Ministry of Health and Senior’s Care

Figure 13 provides a summary of accountability findings in Manitoba’s Ministry of Health and Seniors’ Care transition binder from 2021 and British Columbia’s Ministry of Health Transition binder from 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 13: Manitoba 2023 Ministry of Health and Seniors' Care Transition Binder Accountability Compared to British Columbia 2022 Ministry of Health Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Manitoba, 2021	BC, 2022
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Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central web page	Yes, on page four, there is a Ministry of Health mailing address, two phone numbers, and a webpage link
Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	No	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but links on the central transition binder webpage provide information on Access to Information policies	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of main transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	Yes, on page five, the Honourable Adrian Dix states that the service plan was prepared under his direction, and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.

(British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Manitoba Ministry of Health and Seniors Care, 2021) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Province of Manitoba | Info MB, n.d.) (*Province of Manitoba | Privacy Notification*, n.d.)

Ministry of Infrastructure

Figure 14 provides a summary of accountability findings in Manitoba’s Ministry of Infrastructure transition binder from 2020 and British Columbia’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure transition binder from 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 14: Manitoba 2021 Ministry of Infrastructure Transition Binder Compared to 2022 British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Manitoba, 2021	BC, 2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central webpage	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information on the central transition binder webpage
Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	No	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but links on the central transition binder webpage provide information on Access to Information policies	Not in the binder, but through links on the central transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	No

(British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Manitoba Ministry of Infrastructure, 2021) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Province of Manitoba | Info MB, n.d.)

Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations

Figure 15 provides a summary of accountability findings in Manitoba’s Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Affairs in 2021 compared to British Columbia’s Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation transition binders in 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 15: Manitoba 2021 Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations Transition Binder Accountability Compared to British Columbia 2022 Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Manitoba, 2021	BC, 2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general	Yes, on page six, there is a Ministry of Indigenous

	contact information on the central webpage	Relations and Reconciliation mailing address, a phone number, and a webpage link
Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	No	Not in the binder, but on main transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Not in the binder, but in links on the central transition binder webpage provide information on Access to Information policies	Not in the binder, but in a link at the bottom of the central transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	Yes, on page seven, the Honourable Murray Rankin states that the service plan was prepared under his direction, and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.

(British Columbia Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Manitoba Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, 2021) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Province of Manitoba | Info MB, n.d.) (Province of Manitoba | Privacy Notification, n.d.)

Canada

Figure 16 provides a summary of information on the Government of Canada’s transition binder website in terms of accessibility criteria, such as if a download is required to access the binders, the number of clicks required to access the binder, the presence of support for site visitors, and the number of languages available to read the binders in. Further analysis on these findings will be provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 16: Government of Canada Accessibility Compared to Government of British Columbia Accessibility

Criteria	Canada	BC
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Download required	No	Yes
Number of clicks to access binder	Three	Three
Presence of training/a help link/call center support available for new users present on the page	No	Yes, a toll-free phone number, an email and address, and a link to a webpage; all offer support accessing government records. Additionally, an accessibility tab at the bottom of the page with accessibility supports and services, an accessibility and inclusion toolkit, accessibility policy and guidelines, and accessibility contact and feedback.
Number of languages are available to read the document in	Two, English and French	One, English

(Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023)
 (Open Government, Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, 2023)

Figure 17 provides a summary of information on the Government of Canada’s transition binder website in terms of transparency, using criteria such as providing proof that users accessed the page, if there are advertisements on the page, and if there are search tools. Alongside these findings is a column with British Columbia’s findings for comparison. Further analysis on these findings will be provided in Chapter Six.

Figure 17: Government of Canada Transparency Compared to Government of British Columbia Transparency

Criteria	Canada	BC
Receipt/certification to prove you have accessed the page	No	No
Presence of advertisements	No	No
Security statement present	A Privacy tab is at the bottom of the ‘Open Government’ page. Clicking this tab allows users to read about the	Yes, a Privacy tab is present at the bottom of the page. When clicked, there is a B.C. Government Website Privacy

	collection of user data, the Privacy Act, and contact information for users with concerns or questions about their data collection. The page also includes information on web analytics and security incidents.	Statement which defines ‘personal information,’ the scope of the statement, how a user’s information is collected, the information that is collected, the purpose for collecting this information, how to opt out of having information collected, the safeguards that are in place to protect a user’s personal information, how long information is retained, how to access and correct a user’s submitted information, and an email address to contact for more information.
Search tools	Yes, a ‘Search for open data and information’ option	Yes, a “search the catalogue” feature

(Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023) (Open Government, Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, 2023) (Service Canada, 2022)

Health Canada

Figure 18 provides a summary of accountability findings in Health Canada’s transition binder from 2021 with British Columbia’s Ministry of Health transition binder from 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings are included in Chapter Six.

Figure 18: Health Canada 2021 Transition Binder Accountability Compared to British Columbia Ministry of Health 2022 Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Canada, 2021	BC, 2022
Contact information	Ministry-specific ‘Contact Us’ is at the bottom of the page	Yes, on page four, there is a Ministry of Health mailing address, two phone numbers, and a webpage link
Authors present	No	No

Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but there is a ‘did you find what you were looking for?’ option at the bottom of the page	Not in binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	Notice: Information was severed in accordance with the Access to Information Act.	Not in the binder, but in a link at the bottom of the central transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	Yes, on page five, the Honourable Adrian Dix states that the service plan was prepared under his direction, and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.

(British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Health Canada, 2022) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Infrastructure Canada

Figure 19 provides a summary of accountability findings in Infrastructure Canada’s 2021 transition binder with British Columbia’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure 2022 transition binder. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings is included in Chapter Six.

Figure 19: Infrastructure Canada 2021 Transition Binder Accountability Compared to British Columbia 2022 Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Canada, 2021	BC, 2022
Contact information	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information is at the bottom of the webpage.	Not ministry-specific, and not in the binder. Only general contact information at the bottom of the webpage.

Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but there is a ‘did you find what you were looking for?’ option at the bottom of the page	Not in the binder, but on the central transition binder webpage
Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	No	Not in the binder, but in a link at bottom of the main transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	No

(British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Infrastructure Canada, 2022) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Crown-Indigenous Relations

Figure 20 provides a summary of accountability findings in Canada’s Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations from 2021 with British Columbia’s Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation transition binders from 2022. The table uses criteria such as if the binder includes contact information, if the binders’ author is present, if there is a statement that encourages citizens to reach out with questions, if there is a statement that includes citizens’ rights and access to information policies, and if an accountability statement is present. Further analysis on these findings are included in Chapter Six.

Figure 20: Crown-Indigenous Relations 2021 Transition Binder Accountability Compared to British Columbia 2022 Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Transition Binder Accountability

Criteria	Canada, 2021	BC, 2022
Contact information	Ministry-specific ‘Contact Us’ is at the bottom of the page	Yes, on page six, there is a Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation mailing address, a phone number, and a webpage link
Authors present	No	No
Statement encouraging users with questions to reach out	Not in the binder, but there is a ‘Did you find what you were looking for?’ option at the bottom of the page	Not in the binder, but on central transition binder webpage

Statement including rights of citizens/access to information policies	No	Not in the binder, but in a link at the bottom of the main transition binder webpage
Presence of accountability statement	No	Yes, on page seven, the Honourable Murray Rankin states that the service plan was prepared under his direction, and that he is accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. Though service plans are not transition advice, previous plans can be levered to serve this function.

(British Columbia Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2022) (Government Communications and Public Engagement, 2023) (Government of Canada; Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2022) (Ministry of Citizens’ Services, 2023)

Summary

In summary, this chapter has showcased research using the criteria established under the pillars of accessibility, transparency, and accountability. Specifically, this chapter explored two additional jurisdictions, Manitoba and Canada, and compared these findings with British Columbia. The following section, Chapter Six, will analyze these findings and those in Chapter Four, using the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis as a foundation.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis

This chapter discusses and analyzes the research findings which were in Chapters Four and Five through the framework of the thesis research question:

In what ways does the Government of British Columbia’s publication of ministerial transition documents support government transparency, government accountability, and citizen accessibility, compared to the Government of Manitoba’s and the Government of Canada’s publication of transition documents?

In order to assess how British Columbia’s transition binders and their associated websites support the principles and practices related to accessibility, accountability, and transparency, this answer will discuss the research findings while going through the criteria outlined prior to conducting this research in the conceptual framework, which is supplemented and inspired by the work of Gant and Gant (2002) (*see Figures 2-5*). Based on these criteria, this chapter calculates the number of criteria the jurisdiction meets in favour of accessibility, transparency, and accountability. The colour green indicates that the jurisdiction meets the criteria, yellow reflects that the jurisdiction partially meets the criteria, and red indicates that the jurisdiction does not meet the criteria. These calculations are reflected below in *Figures 21-23*.

Accessibility

As evident in *Figure 21* below, British Columbia meets two out of the four outlined accessibility criteria, compared to Manitoba, partially meeting the presence of user support systems, and Canada meeting three criteria. The Government of British Columbia’s transition binder website requires users to download the binder, allows users to access the binder they need within three clicks, provides support and accessibility for users, and allows citizens to read the binders in English only. Further details on these accessibility criteria comparing British Columbia with Manitoba and Canada are listed below.

Figure 21: British Columbia, Manitoba, and Canada Accessibility Measures

	British Columbia	Manitoba	Canada
Download Required	Yes	Yes	No
Minimal clicks to access binder	Yes	No	Yes
Presence of user support systems	Yes	Yes, on an additional tab	No
Material available to read in more than one language	No	No	Yes

Though British Columbia requires users to download documents in order to view them and only makes binders available to view in English, the government’s commitment to accessibility in its government websites is still evident. For example, when attempting to access the binders, British Columbia requires the lowest number of clicks to reach this destination, on par with the Government of Canada, at only three. In comparison to Manitoba, at five clicks, this interface is more approachable and accessible for a new user. In addition, there are numerous support systems for users who may be new to visiting government websites or have low levels of digital literacy in general. The government includes a toll-free phone number, an email address, and a mailing address for citizens who have questions or concerns. At the bottom of the webpage are an additional weblink with accessibility supports and services, an accessibility and inclusion toolkit, a description of accessibility policies in use, and an accessibility representative to contact for feedback.

Therefore, due to a relatively low number of clicks in combination with a plethora of resources offering users support, the Government of British Columbia supports principles and practices related to accountability for citizens accessing government transition binders, at least to some extent. British Columbia could improve its accessibility in publicizing transition binders if the province began to make its binders available to read in more than one language and if the province began to offer the binders on the website directly, as opposed to requiring users to take the additional step of downloading the binders.

Transparency

See *Figure 22* for a visual representation that indicates how British Columbia meets three out of the four outlined research criteria, being one of the two jurisdictions with the highest results of this study, alongside Canada. The Government of British Columbia’s transition binder website does not provide a certification of access, does not have advertisements, and includes a security statement and search feature. These jurisdictions are compared to Manitoba, which fully meets two of the transparency criteria, and partially meets the search tool requirement by offering a drop-down menu rather than a comprehensive search tool. See the below writings that walk through a detailed description of the predetermined transparency criteria.

Figure 22: British Columbia, Manitoba, and Canada Transparency Efforts

	British Columbia	Manitoba	Canada
Receipt to prove access to page	No	No	No
Advertisements present	No	No	No
Security statement present	Yes	No	Yes
Search tools	Yes	No	Yes

Analyzing the Government of British Columbia's transition binder website proved to be reflective of some of its transparency efforts. British Columbia does not provide users with a certification or receipt to prove they accessed the webpage, but Canada and Manitoba do not provide this feature to users either. In a similar fashion, neither British Columbia, nor Canada, nor Manitoba had advertisements on their web pages, proving consistent objectivity between all researched jurisdictions (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 6). The Government of British Columbia provides a search tool for users to easily access the information they need (Gant & Gant, 2002, p. 6), which is a feature on par with the Government of Canada and a step up from the Government of Manitoba, which only includes menu drop-down options. Each government also included security statements on their websites, allowing users to read about their jurisdictions' privacy act and how their information is collected.

Though the Government of British Columbia upholds some of the principles and practices related to transparency, most of these efforts are also taken by the Governments of Manitoba and Canada. This may indicate that these are common practices and not particularly unique to British Columbia. In order to improve the province's transparency levels when publicizing transition binders, the Government of British Columbia may choose to implement a system that generates a receipt or other certification for users who access materials.

Accountability

The Government of British Columbia proved to show the highest levels of accountability in each of the analyzed ministries, compared to both Manitoba and Canada. British Columbia's Ministry of Health met four out of five of the outlined accountability metrics by providing ministry-specific contact information, not having authors present, not including a ministerial statement encouraging users to contact, including an accountability statement, and including access to information policies on the primary webpage. These findings are compared to Manitoba's Ministry of Health and Seniors' Care meeting only one criteria and Health Canada meeting two and partially meeting the metric of a 'statement encouraging users with questions to reach out.' In British Columbia's Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the province met two criteria: including statements encouraging users to reach out and access to information policies on the transition binder webpage. These findings are in comparison to the Government of Manitoba and Canada's binders meeting one criteria. British Columbia's Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation met four of the outlined criteria: ministry-specific contact information, a ministerial accountability statement, and statements that encourage users to reach out with questions and that explain the province's access to information policies. These findings are compared to Manitoba's Ministry of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations meeting one and Crown-Indigenous Relations meeting one and partially providing a 'statement encouraging users with questions to reach out'. *Figure 23* provides a visual representation of these findings, and the writings below provide further detail on the metrics found to be met and lacking by British Columbia.

Figure 23: British Columbia, Manitoba, and Canada Accountability Efforts, by Ministry

	BC Health	BC Infrastructure	BC Indigenous	MB Health	MB Infrastructure	MB Indigenous	CA Health	CA Infrastructure	CA Indigenous
Contact information	Yes	Not ministry-specific	Yes	Not ministry-specific	Not ministry-specific	Not ministry-specific	Yes	Not ministry-specific	Yes
Authors present	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Statement for questions	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No other	No, other	No, other
Access to information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Accountability statement	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

This research noticed improvements in accountability practices from British Columbia’s 2020 binders to their 2022 binders. For example, in 2020, the Ministry of Health did not include contact information in its binder, but in 2022, included a ministry mailing address, two phone numbers, and a webpage link for citizens to access. The same change is evident in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. These changes may indicate that some ministries may be making continuous, intentional efforts to support and uphold principles related to accountability. Further, the Government of British Columbia includes a statement on its transition binder web page which encourages citizens to come forward with questions, indicating an effort towards high accountability. This type of statement is not evident in the Government of Manitoba’s or the Government of Canada’s transition binder web pages.

The Government of British Columbia also includes a link to its access to information policies on its main transition binder webpage, which is an effort similar to the Government of Manitoba. Lastly, British Columbia’s Ministry of Health includes a ministerial statement of accountability in both 2020 and 2022. British Columbia’s Ministry of Health includes a similar statement in its 2022 binder, a change from 2020. In contrast, British Columbia’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure does not include a statement like this in either 2020 or 2022’s binder. The Governments of Canada and Manitoba do not include accountability statements in any of the binders this thesis viewed.

The Government of British Columbia proves its provincial accountability efforts by encouraging users to come forward with questions and informing them of access to information policies. However, the findings in this pillar also indicate a level of ministerial efforts in

achieving accountability principles, evident in the findings that differentiate between ministry, such as the presence of accountability statements and ministry-specific contact information. In order to improve the ability of citizens to hold officials accountable by using these binders, the Government may decide to include the names of the people who helped create the binders as authors, and each ministry may begin to disclose ministerial statements of accountability within their binders. Under the status quo, British Columbia's Ministries of Health and Indigenous Relations included statements of accountability in their binders, while the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure did not.

Unexpected Findings

Since British Columbia was the only jurisdiction in this thesis to have two sets of transition binders analyzed, there presented a unique opportunity to analyze potential transparency, accessibility, and accountability improvements made from one transition to the next (ex. See the changes made from 2020 to 2022 in *Figure 10*). These findings are particularly fascinating since they prove that transparency, accessibility, and accountability findings may continue to improve quickly, and that ministries may be provided with some level of independence to pursue these initiatives.

Summary and Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

At the onset of this research, the Conceptual Framework in *Figure 5* was developed based on the relevant literature relating to this thesis. In an effort to answer this thesis' research question, this thesis has gone through the criteria established in this framework. The criteria, largely supported by the work of Gant and Gant (2002), proved to show strong indications of the different transparency, accountability, and accessibility efforts through the case studies of this research. Even though the work of Gant and Gant (2002) is over twenty years old, many of the themes outlined in their work are relevant today. None of the researched jurisdictions reflected using all of the transparency, accessibility, or accountability efforts outlined in the conceptual framework, which may indicate that there are improvements to be made.

In order for British Columbia to improve its transparency, accessibility, and accountability metrics when publicizing transition documents, further actions can be taken. For starters, the province could remove the requirement to download documents and instead, offer the binders straight on a web browser like the Government of Canada does. Additionally, the Government could improve citizens' access to the documents by increasing the number of languages that are available for citizens to read them in. This way, citizens who speak languages other than English would be able to access the documents with fewer barriers. In order to increase the level of transparency in publicizing its transition binders, the Government of British Columbia could provide a certificate for users who access materials, to provide an official level of proof of access. In order to make it easier for citizens who wish to hold their government accountable through the use of transition binders, the Government of British Columbia may choose to include the binders' authors in its writings and require each ministry to disclose a

Ministerial statement of accountability, as opposed to only enforcing that some ministries pursuing this effort.

In summary, this chapter has reviewed the Government of British Columbia's commitment to supporting the principles and practices related to accessibility, transparency, and accountability, as outlined in the conceptual framework in *Figure 5*. This analysis was done in part, by comparing findings between the jurisdictions of the Governments of Canada and Manitoba. Though the criteria outlined in the conceptual framework do not cover every aspect of government accessibility, transparency, and accountability, this research was able to gain insight into some of the important elements of these research pillars and gather some unexpected insights into the publication of transition binders.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Strategic and Research Implications

Governments can use the findings in this study to learn mindful ways to disclose documentation, specifically transition documents. As governments begin to move towards further transparency, the indicators written in this study can provide insight to other jurisdictions for beneficial transparency, accessibility, and accountability practices. This research was conducted from a citizen-centred perspective, and the indicators included in the tables in Chapters Four and Five reflect this. Hence, even if jurisdictions do not have plans to publicize their transition documents soon, this research still provides valuable strategies for governments to inform citizens of their practices when visiting government websites.

Further, if additional Canadian provincial or territorial governments choose to publicize their transition documents in the future, researchers may look upon this research and use the framework in this study or build upon it when analyzing other jurisdictions. Pursuing this research was challenging since there is a lack of research that examines Canadian transition documents practically and objectively, let alone the websites that publish these documents. If future potential scholars are also interested in analyzing transition documents, this thesis will provide a collection of resources and a comparative analysis of different Canadian jurisdictions to aid in future research.

Limitations of Analysis

The analysis in this research is limited, partially because this research did not review every ministry in the Government of British Columbia. Further, this thesis was not able to determine which public servants helped contribute to the building of these binders, and therefore, it was not possible to interview civil servants and ask questions relating to the binders. Similarly, if public servants had been interviewed during this research, it would have been possible to inquire about internal processes, such as why some ministries choose similar or different content to include in their binders. Interviewing civil servants would have informed this thesis about why a government may choose or not choose to take certain steps relating to different transparency, accessibility, and accountability indicators, and therefore, this research can not make assumptions about a government's priorities based on whether or not they take certain efforts. Governments choosing not to pursue certain transparency, accessibility, or accountability initiatives may be due to insufficient funding or staffing, insufficient information management systems, or internal difficulty in creating organizational change. The research within this thesis provides partial findings to significant questions, but there are indeed gaps that need to be addressed to understand transparency, accessibility, and accountability in the context of Canadian transition binders.

Areas for Further Research

There are many potential areas that future research may move towards related to government transition documents and government transparency, accessibility, and accountability. Additional avenues for research may:

- seek download data from the studied governments of this study to see how many citizens make use of transition binders;
- undertake content analysis to determine the utility of the binders for educating key stakeholders and ensuring accountability;
- seek information on when transition binders are posted to gauge how quickly they could be used for accountability purposes;
- continue to analyze the accessibility, transparency, and accountability of alternate Canadian jurisdictions when additional provinces and territories publicize their transition documents;
- focus on a singular pillar of government transparency, accessibility, or accountability including more jurisdictions;
- or interview public servants to address the gaps and remaining questions of this thesis.

Although the research question animating this thesis was quite focused, by drawing attention to the publication of transition documents, this work will ideally increase awareness and lead to greater utilization of this valuable resource, subsequently prompting additional research on their value, availability, and effectiveness.

Final Reflections

This research has determined that British Columbia is performing better than Manitoba and about equal to Canada in its transparency when publicizing transition documents. In terms of accessibility, British Columbia performs better than Manitoba, but one indicator worse than Canada. In its accountability metrics, British Columbia performs better than both Canada and Manitoba. Though British Columbia performs well in each of these pillars, there is still room for improvement. As such, this thesis has provided potential further action for the Government of British Columbia to take in order to make the publication of its transition documentation more transparent, accessible, and accountable. For example, the province could begin to make its binders available in languages other than English, begin to provide a certification for those who have accessed the binders, or including ministerial accountability statements on all binders. However, the changes from 2020 to 2022, as evident in *Figure 10* may indicate that the government is committed to improving the citizen experience of accessing transition binders, which is a positive sign.

Though making efforts toward government transparency, accountability, and accessibility are positive movements, choosing to publicize transition documents is not a simple decision. It is crucial that when governments proactively disclose important documentation, they take into consideration barriers that citizens may have when accessing this information, such as the

challenges outlined in this research. Governments beginning to publish their transition binders is a step in the right direction, but the true potential benefits of these efforts cannot be reaped until transparency, accessibility, and accountability challenges are minimized.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Analyzed Websites

Government of British Columbia

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/open-government/open-information/government-information-regularly-released/corporate-and-ministry-transition-binders>
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/Transition_Binder_Health_December_2022.pdf#page=3
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/DA24222_Transition_Binder_Ministry_of_Health_December_2020.pdf#page=3
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/Transition_Binder_Transportation_and_Infrastructure_December_2022.pdf#page=5
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/DA24224_Transition_Binder_Ministry_of_Transportation_and_Infrastructure_December_2020.pdf#page=11
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/Transition_Binder_Indigenous_Relations_and_Reconciliation_December_2022.pdf#page=4
- http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/DA24223_Transition_Binder_Ministry_of_Indigenous_Relations_and_Reconciliation_December_2020.pdf#page=153

Government of Manitoba

- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/accessibility/index.html>
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/openmb/infomb/departments/index.html>
- https://gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/briefings/november2021/hsc_binder.pdf
- https://gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/briefings/november2021/irnr_binder.pdf
- https://gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/briefings/november2021/mi_binder.pdf
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/accessibility/index.html>
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/openmb/infomb/departments/index.html>
- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/legal/privacy.html>

Government of Canada

- <https://open.canada.ca/en>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/transparency/privacy.html>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/about-health-canada/proactive-disclosure/briefing-documents/2021-ministerial-briefing-volume-1-overview-health-portfolio.html>
- <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/pd-dp/transition/2021/infoc/index-eng.html>
- <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1639775351615/1639775496510>