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June 4, 2013

Ms. Suzanne Legault  
Information Commissioner of Canada  
Place de Ville, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Tower B  
112 Kent Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 1H3

Ms. Legault,

Recently Democracy Watch submitted an Access to Information Request to the Privy Council Office asking:

" How many times since April 1, 2007 has the Ethics Commissioner communicated in any way with anyone in or employed in any way (including as a contractor or advisor) by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) or Privy Council Office (PCO) regarding situations that affect Cabinet ministers, their staff, Cabinet appointees and senior government officials covered by the Conflict of Interest Act or about any other matter relating to the Conflict of Interest Act or the Ethics Commissioner's mandate under that Act?"  
(PCO file A-2013-0023 / HB)

We clarified the response after several conversations in order to help them best understand what we were asking for and to simplify the process as much as possible. The clarifications include:

1. "For example, if the departments can search their email servers for communications records easily and quickly to get a number then let's start with that and go from there"
2. "A 'situation' is a (set of) communication(s) on a single topic/question. For example, one question may involve several communications in order to clarify the question and get a response, this would be considered a single situation. It is likely each communication in any given situation would occur within a narrow timeframe.  
Communications about a situation could begin from the Commissioner or one of the offices, we are seeking information regardless of who prompted the discussion.  
We recommend that, in order to help you find this information more readily, you look for emails and phone calls and letters and etc between these offices and group them based on topic of the conversation (for example, there may be several emails/other correspondence pertaining to a single question, this would be a single situation). We are seeking the release of a single document per situation (the one most easily released)."
3. "We don't have particular topics or areas, we are seeking details on the number of situations each commissioner communicated with the offices. If going back to 2007

under these conditions is too much of a workload please let us know how far back would be practical for your office."

In response the Privy Council Office determined they would need to "consult a few government institutions" and granted themselves up to a 180 day extension.

We feel that because we are asking for very basic information (initially the number of communications, but when we were told a document had to be released we requested the one most easily released) that is readily available through searching emails and communications (which current technology makes very simple) there is no reason for the arbitrary and lengthy extension.

Kindest regards,

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