

# GovTalk

Get to the Point.

This material was prepared by Andrew Graham, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. Use it freely and share it with my full permission. If you have any comments or questions, contact me at [andrew.graham@queensu.ca](mailto:andrew.graham@queensu.ca)

## 1.4 Briefing Note To Prepare A Response

A Briefing Note to prepare a response is designed to get everyone on the same page with respect to an event or statement that affects the user of the Note but also the department or governments a whole. More than the question “What do we say about this?” in relevance here is the question “What do we all say about this?”

Response Briefing Notes are used to:

- Develop an interpretation and response to events or changes in the environment
- Assess the policy and program implications
- Formulate a response in terms of both actions – “What are we doing?” and communications – “What are we saying about this?”
- Assess the reactions to both the situation and the response.
- Assess the risks.
- Provide the reader with a response strategy and speaking notes.

### General Layout

Title

**Issue**

For example, “This Note proposes a response to the security issues raised in the Department’s management of confidential information concerning refugees in the Globe and Mail yesterday. Q.P. cards will be prepared once we have your direction.”

If the direction is already known, then you do not need a response. Create a response note only to clear the air.

**Background****Current status****Discussion/Analysis (not always included)****Anticipated Questions (not always included)****Suggested Responses**

A Question Period – Q.P. - Card is a standardized speaking note cards prepared for Minister to prepare her to answer questions in the legislature during Question Period.

## Example Response Briefing Note

### Briefing Note

## Response to Allegations of Misuse of Personal Information

### For Responding to an Emerging Issue

#### Issue

This Note proposes a response to the security issues raised in the Department's management of confidential information concerning refugees in the Globe and Mail yesterday. Q.P. cards will be prepared once we have your direction.

#### Background

In the Globe article, several refugees claimants stated that their personal information had been made available to various agents allegedly acting on their behalf and without their permission. The Globe sought confirmation from the Department but no response has been given to date.

These allegations have not been confirmed by any internal investigation into the matter. The claimants did not provide any information on who the supposed agents were to assist the Department in substantiating the claims.

The only other parties to comment on this were immigration lawyers working with the claimants. They did not offer any substantiation but criticized the Department for generally loose management of private information.

#### Current Status

The Department is investigating these claims. It has asked the claimants for more information to work with.

The Department continues to take the security of all the information it holds seriously. It adheres to all Government policy in this regard.

It is too early for anyone to either deny or confirm any problem.

A QP card is being prepared.

#### Suggested Response

The following are the proposed responses:

- The Department is investigating these allegations.
- We take them seriously but cannot confirm any misuse of information at this point.
- We welcome any further information the refugee claimants may have to help us find and correct whatever problem may exist.
- The Department is diligent in protecting personal information of all kinds. It adheres to all Government policies in these matters.

Prepared by the Deputy Minister's Office

Approved by the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Minister, Mohammed Allumi, 613-748-9977  
[mohammed.allumi@canada.gc.ca](mailto:mohammed.allumi@canada.gc.ca)