

# Consultations for the 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan on Open Government

## Open Data for Results – Framing the discussion

### Executive Summary

**Context:** As part of its membership in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international multilateral initiative, the Government of Canada is developing its 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan on Open Government. This Action Plan will apply the principles and tools of open government, such as transparency, accountability, engagement, collaboration, inclusion and open data, to address targeted problems. Creating an action plan in consultation with civil society and the public is a key component of this process.

**Topic:** Access to Open Data emerged as a theme in our latest National Action Plan consultations.

**Goal:** Apply transparency, accountability and citizen participation principles and tools to open data to drive results

#### What we heard from participants who have engaged in our consultations:

Participants emphasized the need to:

- Increase collaboration across the Government of Canada, with provinces, territories and municipalities, and external stakeholders including academia, the nonprofit sector, and the private sector with a goal to increase the amount and effectiveness of open data available.
- Conduct meaningful and targeted engagement with stakeholders and rights holders (i.e. engagement with Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness) to raise awareness and communicate decisions on policies and programs throughout the process, not only as a one-off or an afterthought. Open data should be leveraged to enhance this engagement.
- Integrate a diversity, inclusion, and equity lens into data collection (i.e. collection of disaggregated data) as well as the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs (e.g. applying Gender-Based Analysis Plus - GBA+) to the development stages of the commitment.
- Make **government information more available and accessible** by proactively disclosing information of interest to Canadians (i.e. requested through access to information requests), removing barriers to Access to Information (ATI) for all citizens (e.g. Crown copyrights, redactions, delays in receiving documents) and **increasing access to subject-matter experts in government** for journalists and researchers. Canadians also noted they'd like to see **centralized information hubs** to increase the public's awareness and ability to find the information without barriers.
- Lift barriers to and improve the **management of open data**, starting with Government of Canada data stewards' awareness of the value and impact of data when released, open data literacy and targeting open data to the needs of specific stakeholders and better communicating success stories. Attention should be put on data collection practices (e.g. disaggregated data), infrastructure, standardization, and discoverability (e.g. federating open data with provinces, territories and municipalities). For instance, participants told us there is a need to **improve data infrastructures** through integrated expertise from the private sector and by overcoming dependence on legacy systems. Participants also suggested open data as a tool to reduce

stigmatization, over-policing, bias in data and the **reduced risk of data manipulation against certain demographics**.

- **Improve public services** by integrating a Tell us once feature, requiring users to only need to share personal information once. This requires better data and information sharing across government backed by appropriate infrastructures and legacy systems for information management. Another idea shared was a centralized portal for all citizen-government interactions, including PT and municipal services.
- **Indigenous reconciliation is important and should be reflected in all government activities.** Delicate topics such as extractive industries on Indigenous land, over-policing of Indigenous communities, Indigenous overrepresentation in prisons, the trauma associated with residential schools, the management of COVID-19 in Indigenous communities, engagement with Indigenous people, and awareness around missing and murdered Indigenous women emerged in discussions throughout the 2020 fall consultation. Open data can contribute to this reconciliation by supporting awareness and informed engagement on program design and implementation.

What are international best practices?

### 1) OECD Policy Areas

The OECD [OURdata Index on Open Government Data](#) measures governments' efforts to make data more Open, Useful and Re-usable (OUR). The Index outlines three areas of focus for public institutions moving towards sharing data with greater transparency and accountability to citizens:

- **Data availability** begins with an Open by Default policy with a presumption of openness for all. Assessing data holdings should involve engagement with stakeholders to understand data quality needs, while promoting and strengthening trust. Meaningful and continuous dialogue is essential to releasing desirable and high-quality datasets, rather than quantity.
- **Data accessibility and useability** by ensuring that open data is delivered through user-driven collaborative platforms in machine-readable and non-proprietary formats that provide timely and disaggregated releases.
- **Government support for data reuse** can be shown through promotion initiatives that raise awareness through user engagement, improved data literacy and ongoing monitoring for results and impact.

### 2) Open Data Charter Policy Areas

The international [Open Data Charter \(ODC\)](#) encourages governments to collect, share and use well-governed data to respond to critical social, economic and environmental issues in a manner that is effective and accountable. This vision is articulated through six guiding principles for how to publish data, including that data should be:

1. open by default
2. timely and comprehensive
3. accessible and usable
4. comparable and interoperable

5. for improved governance and citizen engagement
6. for inclusive development and innovation.

In adopting these principles, governments establish a framework consistent with international standards. Furthermore, the ODC connects public institutions to expertise and tools, which can lend to better implementation of open data projects and facilitates progression from these principles to practical action.

The Government of Canada was an early leader and champion of the ODC initiative. It has adopted the principles and is working with provinces, territories and municipalities to work toward harmonizing data standards across Canada.

### 3) European Data Portal Policy Areas

The European Data Portal (EDP) is the point of access to public data published by the EU institutions, agencies and other bodies and the key policy instrument of the EU open data strategy. Its [Open Data Goldbook](#) provides detailed and practical guidance to organizations seeking to implement Open Data initiatives. Echoing the foundational principles of the ODC, this comprehensive guide highlights five key pillars:

- **open by default**, where all governments publish data and information openly by default
- **quality over quantity**, with emphasis on early release, clear and complete metadata, and user feedback to improve data quality over time
- **usability** by publishing free data in machine-readable formats
- for the purpose of **improved governance**
- and by **promoting open data literacy**, which in-turn drives innovation

#### Where do we go from here?

Mindsets around open data have matured amongst practitioners and experts. While the end state is still open by default where everything that can be released is released, we need to start by focusing on releasing timely, relevant and high-quality data that has the highest potential for impact.

Open Data for Results is key to prioritize public demanded, high-value data and information, raise awareness of the value of the data and mature the management of open data within the Government of Canada.

## What the civil society members of the Multi-stakeholder Forum (MSF) suggest:

### *Regarding topics raised by consultation participants*

**On making government information more available and accessible:** The government needs to ensure ATI processes adhere to accessibility standards. Likewise, in designing digital public services, the government needs to keep in mind the unique accessibility constraints faced by people with disabilities

and strive to offer services that comply with accessibility standards.

**On Indigenous Reconciliation:** A commitment on Indigenous reconciliation would have to be refined and agreed with, and led by, First Nations, Metis, and Inuit organizations and communities. Data and statistics related to this would have to follow OCAP and other existing principles (see [Chapter 3 - Advancing Reconciliation](#)) and the control via agreements of any data, records, and statistics about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit so as to control access to these data, and the possibility of repatriating these data or the development of trusted third party organizations to manage these data. The collection of new data with these organizations needs to be done by, and for, First Nations, Metis and Inuit, and will require institutional, technical, expertise, and financial support. The responsible organizations to be involved would include Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Statistics Canada, Library and Archives Canada, ESDC, and First Nations, Metis and Inuit organizations and governments, such as First Nations Information Governance Centre. And as disability and equity ought to be cross-cutting themes so ought reconciliation.

**On releasing open data to solve policy issues or address known gaps:**

1. **People with disabilities:** Currently there is no national dataset nor even a typology of collective residences and collective care facilities such as group homes, home care, and respite care for people with disabilities. There is no unique classification, and the General Social Survey including the Census does not survey people in these collective dwellings and institutions. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected this group in Canada and while there is data and typologies for collective dwellings for the elderly, they are nonexistent for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are counted as part of the [Employment Equity Act](#) in terms of employment in the Federal Government, there is a new [Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada](#), which has led to the creation of a [Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization](#) (CASDO), the [Canadian Survey on Disability \(CSD\)](#) targets people who are 15 years and over on Census day. These are to be lauded, but there remains an absence of data about the living conditions of this group of people in terms of individual residences and most especially collective dwellings which more often than not involves state support. There is also a lack of any national understanding of how this group of people in Canada are faring and when in collective dwellings, how much freedom is afforded in terms of movement. This would be the responsibility of Statistics Canada, the CASDO, and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).
2. **COVID-19:** governments need to collect and release disaggregated equity data with an intersectional lens about those most affected and their living conditions socially, economically, materially and health-wise.
3. **Clean water access for all households in Canada:** Some communities in Canada are without clean drinking water. The government needs to release data about which communities that do not have clean drinking water, data on what the federal government is doing to provide temporary supplies of clean drinking water, and data about investment and the provision of clean water, and the frequency and results of water inspections. Possible responsible

organizations might be Environmental Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

4. **Housing and Homelessness solutions during COVID-19:** Open data that includes the following variables for all provinces and territories disaggregated at the city level for the following type of residences: rental units, rent geared to income (RGI) units, cooperative housing, social housing, communal residences and shelters. These attributes could be added to the Statistics Canada [LODE](#) Buildings Database and could be a collaboration with CMHC and ESDC the National Homelessness Information Initiative. In addition, data on the current capacity numbers for shelters including overflow by month and the type of accommodations to address the overflow such as hotels or arenas since the start of COVID-19, the availability of shelters accessible to people with disabilities.
5. **Bridging the Digital Divide and Solutions:** Though the [CRTC: Broadband Fund](#), include measures such as rural development and urban affordable internet measures, similar to [ConnectTO](#), and considering access to the internet as an essential service and/or a [utility](#) such as electricity. This would require reporting on where the infrastructure is and is not and related indicators to speed and cost see the work of the [ITU](#). **Collect (disaggregated, location-based) data on internet affordability.** Data on not only internet use but also affordability is needed at the national, provincial, municipal, and neighbourhood levels. Collect more data on digital inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities. Internal actors to be involved would be Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission and Statistics Canada. External actors to engage would be A4AI (Alliance for Affordable Internet): Of note, A4AI uses a [“1 for 2” measure for affordable internet](#) — affordable internet is where 1GB of mobile broadband data is priced at 2% or less of average monthly income”. To date, this “1 for 2” target has been adopted by the UN Broadband Commission, the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria, and Ghana.
6. **Seasonal agricultural workers in Canada data:** Open data about temporary agricultural workers in Canada location, type of work , hours of work, access to healthcare, living conditions and complaint mechanism, number of complaints and inspection information about working and living conditions [Employment and Social Development](#) and other departments. Starting with non-private data from [Canadian Employer Employee Dynamics Database \(CEEDD\)](#).

*The MSF recommended a 7-step approach for Data for Results:*

1. **Identify** → Data gaps are identified
2. **Inventory** → A data inventory is conducted to identify relevant and related survey and administrative data.
3. **Analyze** → Analyze the inventory and identify data gaps.
4. **Collect** → Develop procedures to consolidate existing datasets and work with Civil Society actors to collect new data with responsible authorities.
5. **Publish** → Feature in the Government of Canada Open Data portal.
6. **Act** → Data for Results inform public policy, programs and services to address inequities.
7. **Report Results** → Report policy, program and service improvements and outcomes.

## BACKGROUND

### 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan on Open Government Consultations

- Canada must submit its 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan on Open Government to the Open Government Partnership in 2021 to meet its international obligations.
- To design the plan, the Government of Canada consulted Canadians from Fall 2019 to the end of 2020. The consultation included meetings with civil society, informational webinars, online discussion forums, virtual online events and telephone town halls.
- Four broad themes emerged for further discussions, namely Financial and Corporate Transparency, Climate Change and Sustainable Growth, Combatting Disinformation and Safeguarding Fair Elections, and Access to Justice.