February 25, 2016

Dear Selection Committee of the Open Government Partnership Subnational Government Pilot Program,

I am pleased to offer the endorsement and support of MaRS Discovery District for the Government of Ontario in its application to join the Open Government Partnership Subnational Government Pilot Program.

MaRS Discovery District is a nonprofit charity that works with an extensive network of partners to help entrepreneurs launch and grow the innovative companies that are building our future. Founded by civic leaders, we have a mission that is equal parts public and private — an entrepreneurial venture designed to bridge the gap between what people need and what governments can provide.

Here at MaRS, Canada's largest innovation hub, we have been following and supporting Ontario's open government efforts. We have worked extensively with both Ontario and Canada to help make government and industries more open and innovative. MaRS Data Catalyst is building the data layer for the innovation economy and creating new markets through smarter data access. MaRS Centre for Impact Investing is taking the lead on effective applications of impact investing and pay for performance. MaRS Solutions Lab is working with governments, businesses and communities to tackle complex public, social and economic problems.

Last December, Ontario unveiled its "Open By Default" Open Government Action Plan. We were pleased to have participated in and even helped hosted and designed some of these open citizen engagements. The plan is ambitious, but our past and ongoing partnerships is proof to us of the will and readiness of the government.

In the past years the Government of Ontario has sponsored and co-hosted with MaRS multiple Civic Hackathons and Design Jams to drive the use of open data and harness citizen innovators. While Ontario has rapidly increase its open data offerings and civic utilization, it has also started pushing the boundaries with smart disclosure – allowing citizens to access and share data collected by the government about ourselves. For example, our collaboration on the Green Button project now allows over 60% of Ontario residents (4.2 million residents) to download their energy utilization data. This smart disclosure initiative will soon extend to natural gas and water data. Ontario has already begun collaborating with MaRS on the next frontier for smart disclosure - personal health records data.

Beyond data, the government has also demonstrated its willingness to work with us on open social innovation lab approaches to complex topics like designing regulations for the sharing economy and design lab approaches on sensitive topics like modernization of transfer payments. Ontario's support and collaboration was key to the creation of Canada's first social impact bond on preventing and managing hypertension.

We are proud of our ongoing efforts in Ontario. In summer 2016, we will be co-hosting GovMaker – Canada's open government celebration and innovation conference with Ontario, Toronto, Guelph and other Canadian city leaders.

We believe that the Government of Ontario is committed to the "Open By Default" Open Government Action Plan. We are looking forward to further collaborations on open government implementation projects as well as innovative projects that will push the open government and open data boundaries. We are proud to endorse Ontario's application to the Open Government Partnership Subnational Government Pilot Program.

Yours Sincerely,

Tim Jackson
Executive Vice President Corporate and Community Development
MaRS Discovery District

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MaRS is a member of
Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs