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Canada

Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2014-2016

Mid-term Self-assessment Report

January 2016



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The Government of Canada has committed to leading the efforts in accelerating and expanding open data in order to strengthen openness, and accountability to government. It is striving to set a higher bar for transparency, recognizing that government and its information should be open by default. As this report demonstrates, Canada's open government commitment is shared across federal departments and agencies.

Canada's National Action Plan on Open Government is renewed every two years to ensure we are on track towards greater openness, transparency and efficiency. As part of Canada's commitment to the Open Government Partnership, the Government of Canada summarizes progress at the mid-way point of each Action Plan. For Action Plan 2014-2016, this report is Canada's mid-term assessment of how it is progressing on commitments so far. The Government of Canada is already planning ahead for the third national Open Government plan, to be launched this summer.

As the Government of Canada develops the next Open Government plan, it will consult broadly, seeking the views of a wide range of individuals and organizations that have perspectives to share. While final commitments will be arrived at with extensive public engagement, Canada does anticipate accelerating and expanding open data initiatives so that Canadians can easily access and use their data. Canada also expects to enhance the openness of government overall, including a review of the *Access to Information Act*.

1. Introduction and Background

[Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2014-16](#) is made up of 12 commitments to advance open government along three streams of activity: Open Data, Open Information, and Open Dialogue. This is Canada's second national action plan in support of its membership in the international [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#), which it joined in April 2012. More than 50 deliverables and activities were to be implemented between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2016 under the Action Plan commitments.

The commitments in the plan highlight the principles of transparency, civic participation, public accountability, and access to new technologies for openness and accountability. Commitments focus on improvements in four of the five Grand Challenge areas identified by the OGP:

- improving public services;
- increasing public integrity;
- more effectively managing public resources; and,
- increasing corporate accountability (see Annex).

As Canada marks the end of Year 1 of this Action Plan's two-year time frame, this report provides a mid-term self-assessment of open government commitment progress to date. It outlines how the Action Plan was developed, assesses progress to date, and defines next steps for each commitment. The report also shows how Action Plan 2014-2016 commitments reflect the feedback received from the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) on Canada's first Action Plan and open government activities undertaken over the last year in addition to what was outlined in the Action Plan.

2. Action Plan Development Process

In April 2014, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) conducted consultations to support the development of Canada's second Action Plan. Building on lessons learned in the development of the first plan in 2012, an inclusive approach engaged citizens, civil society organizations, government departments and agencies, academics, and the private sector throughout the development process.

Over a six-month period, Canadians across the country were invited to participate in online and in-person consultation events to explore potential open government activities, refine them into a set of ambitious commitments, and define concrete actions for each. As a final step, a full draft of the Action Plan was posted online for public review and comment. Additional detail on the various phases of this consultation can be found in the [Action Plan](#) and in a ["What We Heard" summary report](#) published in November 2014.

By engaging the public in a way that provided several options for participation, TBS received valuable feedback. Many of these ideas made it into the Action Plan for 2014-2016. Canadians shared three key priorities:

- a) **Make consultation opportunities available with more notice:** Before stakeholders, citizens, and civil society organizations were consulted, all Canadians were given the opportunity to review the proposed consultation plan on the Government of Canada's Open Government Portal. This helped raise awareness of all planned consultation activities, and provided advance notice of online and in-person opportunities to participate in the development of the Action Plan. Canadians were asked to share ideas on how to encourage public input into the development of the Action Plan.
- b) **Make participation easier:** In addition to engaging via the Web and social media throughout the process, citizens and civil society organizations participated in a series of public workshops, discussion panels, and other in-person events in communities across the country. Together, they brainstormed new open government commitments, and set out what could be accomplished within the two-year time frame of the Action Plan.
- c) **Publish results and responses:** An overview of these consultations was posted in a ["What We Heard" Summary Report](#) in November 2014. This report outlined the consultation approach, as well as the comments, ideas, and suggestions from Canadians that helped shape the Action Plan. [Open Government Action Plan Consultation Data](#) was also made available as an open dataset of all feedback received.

Consultation on progress at the half-way point: This assessment benefited from input received through a four-week online consultation that invited Canadians and stakeholders including civil society, academia, the private sector and others to share their views on Canada's progress in completing Year 1 deliverables under the Action Plan. Participation in this consultation was lower than anticipated. Canada recognizes that it must continue to take steps to increase public awareness of both Canada's Action Plan on Open Government, and of the opportunities for Canadians and other stakeholders to provide feedback and direction on the Plan.

A draft of Canada's self-assessment report was shared online for public review, comments, and input. Additional feedback is still welcome on the self-assessment report, and on the open.canada.ca site as a whole.

3. Responding to IRM Recommendations

In early 2014, the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) published its [Canada Progress Report 2012-13](#) on the implementation of Canada's first Action Plan, and made recommendations for improvements to several of Canada's open government activities. The IRM's findings and observations helped to identify and refine many of the commitments in Canada's second Action Plan:

- **Improve public consultation and citizen engagement:** As a direct result of the IRM's findings, Canada worked to improve consultation and engagement with Canadians. For the development of the second action plan, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat engaged early and often, online and in-person with individuals, organizations, academics, and the business world. The government also initiated a number of activities to improve public consultation and citizen engagement beyond the borders of Open Government by establishing principles, best practices, and whole-of-government approaches.
- **Make specific and ambitious commitments:** For each of the 12 commitments, specific deliverables were set out within the period of this Action Plan. The plan has become more specific, as Canada has included commitments that focus on concrete, timed deliverables. With the focus on government-wide activities, policies, and solutions, the development of national standards, and support for international open government initiatives, this plan builds on the first Action Plan.
- **Improve information flow (Access to Information):** Canada has begun modernizing the administration of its Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Programs across the government. In addition to improvements to ATIP administration under the current Action Plan (searchable summaries of [completed Access to Information requests](#), the ability to make [online ATIP requests](#), and enhancements to ATIP training for public servants), a number of other important steps are being taken. For instance, the Open Information portal now provides single-window access to proactively disclosed information on contracts, travel, and hospitality expenditures.

- **Focus on open government, not just open data:** While open data remained a critical component of Canada’s open government strategy, Canada expanded commitments related to government integrity and accountability in the current Action Plan. This includes open contracting, making budget and expenditure information open and accessible, and introducing legislation that requires mandatory reporting on extractives.
- **Standardize information and data and make it more usable:** Canada has improved search and discovery of Government of Canada information and data by standardizing the format to make it reusable, improve access to it and to help users find relevance in the data. Data and metadata are now standardized to ensure the information assets are relatable; allowing users to find what they need, use it, and have the data make sense to be able to use it with data from other sources.
- **Whole-of-government support:** The [Directive on Open Government](#), a recently-launched whole-of-government policy directive, will maximize Canadians’ access to government data and information and prompt a cultural shift to “Open by Default” across government. The [Blueprint 2020 Vision](#) for the future of the federal public service, a complementary initiative, includes creating an open and networked environment that engages citizens and partners for the public good.

The observations and recommendations of this independent assessment of Canada’s open government activities have helped to make the plans more concrete and the open government activities more successful.

4. Implementation of Action Plan Commitments

The status of Canada’s implementation of its current Action Plan commitments is summarized in the following table. Significant progress has been made, with 8 of 12 commitments on schedule to complete all deliverables by the end of the Action Plan in June 2016.

Details on progress for each commitment can be reviewed via the links in the dashboard below, including activities to date, next steps, and assessed completion level.

Commitment	Status
FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENTS	
1. Directive on Open Government	On Schedule
OPEN DATA COMMITMENTS	
2. Open Data Canada	Delayed
3. Canadian Open Data Exchange (ODX)	On Schedule
4. Open Data for Development (OD4D)	On Schedule
5. Open Data Core Commitment	On Schedule
OPEN INFORMATION COMMITMENTS	
6. Open Science	Delayed
7. Mandatory Reporting on Extractives	On Schedule
8. Open Contracting	On Schedule
9. Open Information on Budgets and Expenditures	On Schedule
10. Digital Literacy	On Schedule
11. Open Information Core Commitment	Delayed
OPEN DIALOGUE COMMITMENTS	
12. Consulting with Canadians	Delayed

5. Peer Exchange and Learning

Canada welcomes every opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned in implementing open government initiatives with fellow OGP members and other countries. In fact, Canada’s activities have benefited considerably from leveraging the best practices of other countries. Recent examples of peer-exchange activities with the international open government community include:

- OGP Open Data Working Group:** Canada’s co-leadership of the [OGP Open Data Working Group](#) along with its civil society partner, the Web Foundation, has supported seven OGP member countries to define ambitious open data commitments for their national action plans. Through work in the streams of Principles, Measurement, Standards and Capacity Building, this group has increased awareness of open government data issues, engaging with the broader global open data community to share information and ideas. The Government of Canada’s co-leadership of the Principles stream of activity with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) led to its strong support in the development of the International Open Data Charter.

- **International Open Data Conference:** Canada's hosting of the [3rd International Open Data Conference](#) in May 2015 provided a forum for representatives from countries from around the world to learn more about open data and to share their experiences implementing open data initiatives. [Many of the IODC sessions were broadcast live](#) via the web and a [Webcast Archive](#) has been made available to expand the reach of the information shared during these sessions.
- **Open Data for Development (OD4D):** The OD4D commitment in the current Action Plan includes providing technical support, information, and guidance to developing countries in implementing their open data initiatives (additional information on these activities is included in section 4 of this report).
- **CKAN Association:** Canada is the current chair of the CKAN Association Steering Group, which is made up of users overseeing the development of [CKAN](#), a powerful data management system that provides open source tools to streamline the publishing, sharing, finding and using of data.

6. Open and Transparent Government

The Government of Canada is strongly committed to open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians. On November 13, 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took the opportunity to [publicly release](#) all ministerial mandate letters, as part of his plan for open and transparent government for Canadians.

In its mandate letters, the government has committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. This includes publicly releasing all key information that informs the decisions it makes, and to accelerating and expanding open data initiatives. The transparency mandate expectations of the government will serve to broaden the reach of open government in the plan for the coming two years.

In addition to commitment-specific deliverables highlighted in this report, Canada has launched a variety of activities and initiatives that embrace the spirit of open government that reflect Canada's commitment to integrating the principles of transparency, accountability, and civic participation into government programs and services. Key examples include:

- **International Open Data Charter:** Canada, along with dozens of governments, civil society organizations and international institutions, is leading the charge to develop common global principles for open data. The [International Open Data Charter](#) provides a set of foundational principles for open data as well as an implementation guide to support governments in adopting the principles, standards and practices. At the 3rd International Open Data Conference held in Ottawa on May 28-29, 2015, public consultations were launched to gather feedback and comments on the draft Charter from the international open data community.

- Geomatics Environmental Scan and Value Study:** An independent assessment of the Canadian geomatics sector supported by Natural Resources Canada has been completed, as well as detailed analysis of the economic and non-economic benefits of the use of geospatial technologies and services. In economic terms, geospatial technologies contribute some \$21 billion of value to Canada's Gross Domestic Product, and generate about 19,000 jobs in Canada's economy. Although more difficult to measure, the range of social and environmental benefits is impressive, encompassing improved resource stewardship, better response to disease outbreaks, speedier deployment of first responders in emergency situations, and coordinated and timely management of physical infrastructure.
- Health Transparency and Openness:** The second phase of [Health Canada's Regulatory Transparency and Openness Framework](#) was launched in June 2015. Under the Framework, over 35 other [safety reviews](#) have been posted on Health Canada's website. Other notable 2014-15 accomplishments included: the [Drug and Health Product Register](#), a new tool designed to become the go-to resource for Canadians looking for quick access to information on hundreds of prescription drugs; consulting with Canadians on how to [improve nutritional information on food labels](#); and a [Stakeholder Registry](#) where Canadians can sign up to stay informed of Health Canada's consultations and have a stronger say in the department's priorities and policies.
- Digital Public Square Project:** In January 2015, Global Affairs Canada announced a new partnership with the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs to launch the [Digital Public Square](#) project. This initiative will increase digital space for free expressions and open political dialogue in countries where civil society and citizen participation are under threat. It will provide citizens and civil society organizations with increased access to global information and communications networks, improved connectivity with others living in and outside their countries, and support for citizens' monitoring and reporting on human rights violations or political repression. This project's activities will help to increase political accountability and transparency.

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

Open Government continues to drive change. Canada has made significant progress on the implementation of its second Action Plan on Open Government, although there is still much to be done over the coming year to deliver on commitments to Canadians.

To make sure that citizens and stakeholders can monitor Canada's progress on meeting Action Plan commitments, an End-of-Term Self-assessment Report will be published later in 2016. While developing this final assessment of Canada's Action Plan 2014-2016, the government will be able to use the lessons learned as a strong foundation for future commitments and activities in developing Canada's third Action Plan on Open Government.

Action Plan 2014-2016 has helped to begin to embed open government principles and approaches in the day-to-day work of the public service, and to experiment with new and innovative open government activities. The Government of Canada is committed to accelerating, expanding, and enhancing the government's transparency and accountability.

Annex: Addressing OGP Grand Challenges

Each of the commitments in Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government 2014-16 provides support to one or more of the five Grand Challenges identified by the Open Government Partnership (OGP):

- GC1 – Improving Public Services;
- GC2 – Increasing Public Integrity;
- GC3 – Effectively Managing Public Resources;
- GC4 – Creating Safer Communities; and
- GC5 – Increasing Corporate Accountability.

Commitment	Grand Challenges				
	GC1	GC2	GC3	GC4	GC5
FOUNDATIONAL COMMITMENTS					
1. Directive on Open Government	X	X	X		
OPEN DATA COMMITMENTS					
2. Open Data Canada	X				
3. Canadian Open Data Exchange (ODX)	X				
4. Open Data for Development (OD4D)	X	X	X		
5. Open Data Core Commitment	X		X		
OPEN INFORMATION COMMITMENTS					
6. Open Science	X		X		
7. Mandatory Reporting on Extractives	X	X	X		X
8. Open Contracting	X				
9. Open Info on Budgets & Expenditures	X	X	X		
10. Digital Literacy	X				
11. Open Information Core Commitment	X	X	X		
OPEN DIALOGUE COMMITMENTS					
12. Consulting with Canadians	X				