



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: The Finance & Administration Committee
From: Matthew L. Gaskell, Commissioner of Corporate Services
Report: #2016-A-3
Date: March 1, 2016

Subject:

Information Technology – Open Data Initiative

Recommendations:

THAT the Finance & Administration Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the Region of Durham adopt the principles of Open Data, and declare The Regional Municipality of Durham data to be “Open” through an Open Data pilot; and
 - B) That Corporate Services – Information Technology staff be authorized to implement the appropriate web page presence with the prescribed initial data catalogue.
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Report:

1. Summary

- 1.1 Open data is a philosophy and practice requiring that certain data is made freely available to the public, in machine readable format without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control. Most commonly, Open Data focuses on non-textual material such as geographic data, schedules, statistics, and demographic data.
- 1.2 With the general public and constituents requesting open and transparent data, Durham Region Staff have been investigating how other Canadian cities like Ottawa, Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto and others have adopted the Open Data concept. Attachment #1 outlines the various municipal governments which have adopted an Open Data policy, as well as highlighting their web presence.
- 1.3 In the public sphere, the Government of Canada's commitment to open government is founded on the strong history of transparency and accountability. This was first established with the enactment of the *Access to Information Act* in 1983, which was then followed by the *Federal Accountability Act* in 2006 which introduced proactive disclosure. In 2012 the Government joined the Open Government Partnership and in

June 2013 the Government endorsed the G8 Charter on Open Data. The Government of Ontario in November 2015 released its final directive on open data which states: "Ontario is committed to being the most open and transparent government in Canada. The new Open Data Directive maximizes access to government data by requiring all data to be made public on the Ontario Data Catalogue, unless it is exempt for legal, privacy, security, and confidentiality or commercially-sensitive reasons".

- 1.4 The goal of Open Data is to remove barriers to access to information created or managed by government institutions while respecting privacy and sensitivity concerns. Facilitating access to this information allows entrepreneurs, academics, community groups and others to study communities and develop applications that leverage the data to improve community experience and stimulate economic growth.
- 1.5 The first major Open Data milestone is the creation of a web presence that will make available, in machine-readable format, a number of various data sets. This web page will allow for the quick and inexpensive release of initial data sets to the public, measure the usage of the data, gauge public reaction, and better understand which data is most valued by the public.
- 1.6 Presenting information in machine-readable format effectively "unlocks" the data allowing it to be more easily repurposed for mapping or other applications. Adopting an Open Data approach will ultimately provide improved information and services for our clients, leading to improved customer satisfaction, a key driver of Service Excellence. Those organizations that have adopted the philosophy of openness are seen as technologically progressive and politically transparent.

2. Open Data Drivers

- 2.1 Durham Region's current approach to data dissemination, while clearly outlined, is costly and inefficient. Staff members currently spend a disproportionate amount of time and resources to prepare and share datasets based on individual requests. By streamlining the process, and making data freely available with periodic releases through a public access website, some re-deployable efficiency should be realized as staff will be able to provide data in a raw format directly to the website and allow users to format it as needed.
- 2.2 Practices that restrict access to publicly created and owned data creates barriers to not-for-profit and small organizations or individuals. It can restrict the ability of smaller corporations to compete in an open marketplace, and can stifle innovation in our community. By removing restrictions to such data where appropriate, local industry and research organizations can expand the potential scope of their contributions to local economic development and innovation. Ultimately, this will lead to improved information and service delivery from the Region and an improved customer experience for the residents and businesses.

- 2.3 Finally, with the global movement towards Open Data and Open Government, there is an increasing expectation from the public that the Regional Municipality of Durham will take a leadership role in supporting Open Data across Durham Region.

3. Open Data Initiative Approach

In order to adopt Open Data, Corporate Services – Information Technology is seeking the endorsement of Council to develop an Open Data initiative approach. Through this approach, a pilot data catalogue website will be built and made available for public access. The initial release will focus on readily available GIS and Transit data sets including (but not limited to) a Single Line Road Network (SLRN); Durham-wide Address Points; Transit Routes; Bus Stops and the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data. These datasets are readily available and have data management procedures already in place. The new proposed site will allow:

- Quick release of preliminary data with no cost implications
- The measurement of data quality from a public perspective
- A better understanding of what kind of data has greatest value based on download metrics

- 3.1 Upon the completion of the nine (9) month pilot, Durham Region staff will gather and analyse the Open Data usage information; evaluate the cost, benefit and impact of freely sharing other data sets to the public; and make recommendations to Council on further adoption of Open Data.
- 3.2 To ensure that the needs and expectations of the public are met with regards to the declaration to support Open Data, staff will review and revise existing internal business policies and practices for sharing data to maximize the number of datasets which could be made freely available while continuing to adhere to existing legislation, regulations, and policies.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Finance & Administration Committee, through Regional Council, adopt the principles of Open Data, and declare The Regional Municipality of Durham data to be “Open” through an Open Data pilot for a term of nine (9) months, and that staff of Corporate Services – Information Technology be authorized to implement the appropriate web page presence with the prescribed initial data catalogue.

5. Attachments

Attachment #1: List of municipal governments which have adopted Open Data plus their website address

Respectfully submitted,

M. Gaskell
Commissioner of Corporate Services

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Garry H. Cubitt, M.S.W.
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment #1

Halifax Region Municipality	Nova Scotia	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Fredericton	New Brunswick	<u>Open Data Portal</u>
City of Gatineau	Quebec	<u>Open Data Portal</u>
City of Montréal	Quebec	<u>Portail de données ouvertes</u>
City of Québec	Quebec	<u>Données ouvertes</u>
City of Sherbrooke	Quebec	<u>Open Data Sherbrooke</u>
City of Burlington	Ontario	<u>Open Data Burlington</u>
City of Guelph	Ontario	<u>Open Data Guelph</u>
City of Hamilton	Ontario	<u>Open and Accessible Data</u>
City of Kitchener	Ontario	<u>Open Government</u>
City of London	Ontario	<u>Open Data</u>
City of Mississauga	Ontario	<u>Mississauga Data</u>
City of Niagara Falls	Ontario	<u>Open Data</u>
City of Ottawa	Ontario	<u>Open Data Ottawa</u>
City of Thunder Bay	Ontario	<u>DEVELOPERS - OPEN DATA</u>
City of Toronto	Ontario	<u>Open Data - Accessing City Hall</u>
City of Waterloo	Ontario	<u>Open Data Waterloo</u>
City of Welland	Ontario	<u>Open Data Welland</u>
City of Windsor	Ontario	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
Grey County	Ontario	<u>Open Data Grey County</u>
Haldimand County	Ontario	<u>Open Data Haldimand County</u>
Niagara Region	Ontario	<u>Open Data Niagara</u>
Region of Waterloo	Ontario	<u>Open Data Portal</u>
Region of Peel	Ontario	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
Town of Milton	Ontario	<u>Open Data</u>
Town of Oakville	Ontario	<u>Open Data</u>
Township of North Frontenac	Ontario	<u>North Frontenac Township Open Data</u>
York Region	Ontario	<u>Open Data</u>
City of Brandon	Manitoba	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Winnipeg	Manitoba	<u>Winnipeg Open Data</u>
City of Regina	Saskatchewan	<u>Open Government Data Initiative</u>
City of Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
Town of Banff	Alberta	<u>Open Government Data Initiative</u>
City of Calgary	Alberta	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Edmonton	Alberta	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Grande Prairie	Alberta	<u>Data City of Grande Prairie</u>
County of Grande Prairie	Alberta	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Medicine Hat	Alberta	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Red Deer	Alberta	<u>Red Deer Open Data Catalogue</u>

Strathcona County	Alberta	<u>Open Data Portal</u>
City of Chilliwack	British Columbia	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Kamloops	British Columbia	<u>Open Data Downloads</u>
City of Kelowna	British Columbia	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Nanaimo	British Columbia	<u>Nanaimo Data Catalogue</u>
District of North Vancouver	British Columbia	<u>GEOweb</u>
City of Prince George	British Columbia	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
District of Saanich	British Columbia	<u>Saanich Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Surrey	British Columbia	<u>Surrey Open Data</u>
City of Vancouver	British Columbia	<u>Open Data Catalogue</u>
City of Vernon	British Columbia	<u>City of Vernon Spatial Data Catalogue</u>
City of Victoria	British Columbia	<u>Open Data</u>
Regional District of Central Okanagan	British Columbia	<u>Geographic Information Systems</u>
Regional District of North Okanagan	British Columbia	<u>Digital Data</u>
Township of Langley	British Columbia	<u>Open Data</u>
Port Moody	British Columbia	n/a
City of Whitehorse	Yukon	<u>GIS Open Data</u>