

# Open Data in Ontario

Adopting the International  
Open Data Charter

Treasury Board Secretariat



## Open Government in Ontario

Ontario's [Open Government Initiative](#) is about creating a more open and transparent government for Ontarians by improving public participation, accountability and technology & innovation. Since the Initiative launched in October 2013, the Province has been driving new approaches to policy making, redesigning public engagement, and stimulating the realization of new business opportunities to promote prosperity. Ontario's vision is to be the most open and transparent government in Canada.

The "[Open by Default](#)" Report, released by the Open Government Engagement Team in 2013, was developed in consultation with the public and provides detailed recommendations to advance the goals of Open Government. The Report paved the way for the Open Government Strategy and Action Plan which were endorsed and approved by Ontario's Cabinet in March 2015. Each provincial ministry now has an active Open Government Action Plan ensuring that they embed the principles of Open Government in their programs and policies.

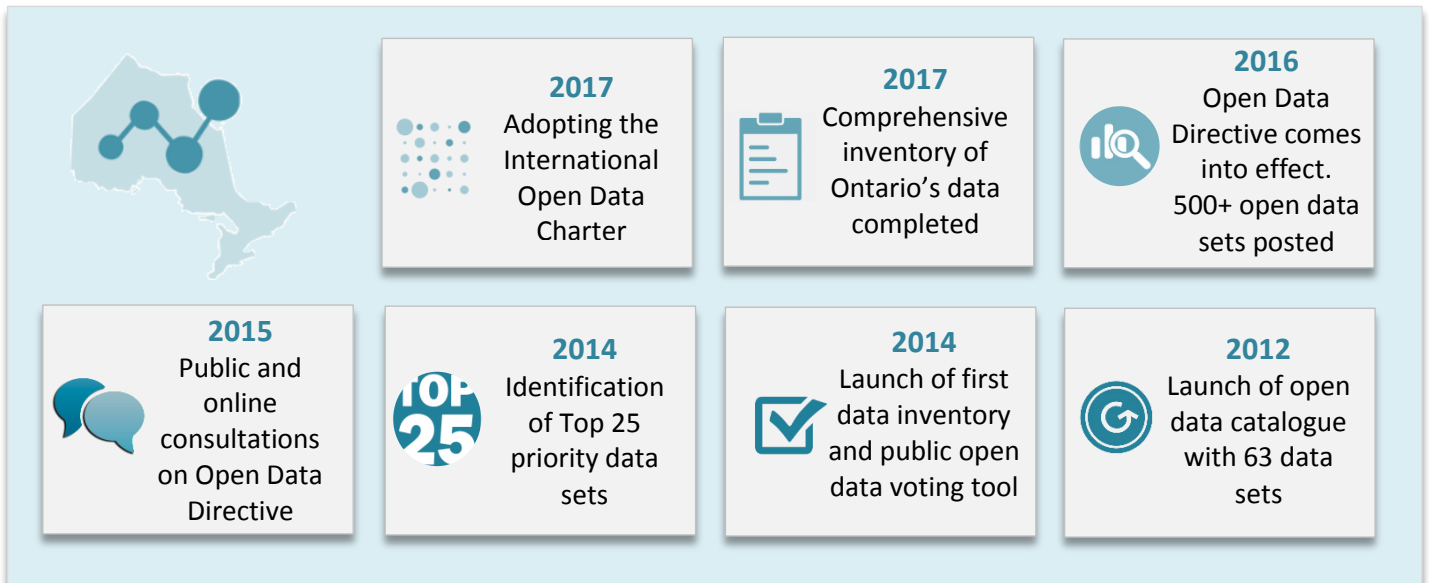
In May 2015, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to co-create an Open Data Directive. The Directive came into force on April 2016 and drives the 'open-by-default' policy that is at the core of Ontario's plan for open data and drives the release of open data into the [Ontario Data Catalogue](#). As of March 2017, the Catalogue holds over 2,000 ministry datasets, over 500 of which are open. Ontario's provincial agencies are also required to comply with the Directive and have started releasing their data inventories online.

Ontario strives to lead in all areas of open government including open information and open dialogue. In March 2016, Ontario released its [Public Engagement Framework](#), and the [Consultations Directory](#) on Ontario.ca to ensure that Ontarians have more opportunities to weigh-in on government decision-making to help improve the programs, policies and services that impact them.

Ontario also released all Minister's [Mandate Letters](#) for the past two years, [Orders in Council](#), and visualized its [Public Accounts](#), enabling the public easier access to information to hold the government accountable.

In April 2016 Ontario was selected by the [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP) to be part of its new subnational pilot program. As a member of the program, Ontario co-created three Open Government commitments with public, non-government organizations and community groups and vowed to implement these commitments by the end of 2017. One of the commitments was to adopt the [International Open Data Charter](#). By doing so, Ontario will join an emerging body of national and subnational governments who are committed to sharing government data online so developers, non-profit organizations, researchers and others can make life better for their citizens.

## Ontario's Open Data Journey and Snap Shot



**450,300+** downloads as of April 2017

**~3,000** downloads every week

**2,358** datasets on the Catalogue

**576** open datasets

**1015** datasets under review

**569** restricted datasets

**32** ministry inventories

**90+** agency inventories online

**100+** training sessions for staff

**2,000+** staff trained

**First** province to have an open consultation on its Open Data Directive

## Ontario's Open Data Directive

Ontario's [Open Data Directive](#) came into effect in April 2016. It requires all data created, collected and/or managed by ministries and provincial agencies to be made public as open data, unless it is exempt for privacy, confidentiality, security, legal or commercially-sensitive reasons.

In line with open dialogue and active participation, the Province consulted with the public on the draft Directive in a number of ways, including:

- online, using Google Doc, email and social media
- through outreach to academia, policy makers, business leaders, non-profit and municipal partners, and
- in-person through events such as Ontario’s GO Open Data Conference, local Civic Design Camps, and in partnership with academia and community organizations

The strong alignment between the principles of the Open Data Directive and the International Open Data Charter demonstrate that Ontario has a strong foundation for open data and for the adoption of the International Open Data Charter.

## Adopting the International Open Data Charter

Ontario is proud to join other national and subnational governments that have adopted the International Open Data Charter and have also committed to sharing government data online so developers, non-profit organizations, researchers and others can make life better for their citizens.

In addition to joining this community of leaders in open data, adopting the Charter enables Ontario to strengthen inter-governmental coordination and collaboration with other jurisdictions.

## Implementation Plan

### ***Delivery Mechanism***

The Charter will be operationalized through Ontario’s Open Government Action Plan, specifically, the implementation of the [Open Data Directive](#). The Directive is supported by an Open Data Guidebook. The Open Data Guidebook provides Ontario ministries and provincial agencies with information on Ontario’s open data processes. It explains the requirements of Ontario’s Open Data Directive and provides guidance to ensure consistent approaches to open data practices across government.

The Open Government Office of Ontario’s Treasury Board Secretariat is currently working with ministries and provincial agencies to ensure that the principles and mandatory requirements of the Open Data Directive are put into operation.

### ***Activities and Timing***

The table below illustrates the key initiatives and activities that Ontario has been undertaking as part of Ontario’s Open Government Strategic Plan since the Open Data Directive came into effect in 2016.

Ontario is building on these activities throughout 2017 as part of its participation in the Open Government Partnership and will continue to engage and seek public participation into the prioritization of activities as the Open Data Directive and Open Data Charter are operationalized.

| Open Data Charter Principle     | Key Activities   | Timing  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Open by Default</b>          | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario’s Open Data Directive came into effect on April 1. It ensures that government data is open by default unless exempted from release in limited and specific circumstances as set out in the directive.</li> <li>The directive sets out responsibilities at all levels in order to promote a culture of openness, leadership and oversight of open data.</li> <li>The Directive is implemented in a manner consistent with existing legal obligations and privacy requirements.</li> <li>As part of Ontario’s data inventory, clear justification is provided as to why certain data cannot be released.</li> </ul>   | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b><br/>started April 1, 2016</p>   |
| <b>Timely and Comprehensive</b> | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario has created a comprehensive government-wide data Inventory that is published online and accessible to the public. All ministries have included their inventories in the data inventory. Provincial agencies are releasing their data inventories.</li> <li>The Inventory contains datasets with all levels of access (open, under review, or restricted). For those datasets that are not open, a clear justification of why the data cannot be released is provided.</li> <li>All data is required to be released in a timely manner, in an open format, unmodified, and include a data dictionary where available.</li> <li>Users are given opportunities to provide feedback to the government about specific datasets within the Inventory.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore new opportunities to obtain user feedback to improve data quality</li> <li>Aim to have all eligible provincial agencies release their data inventories</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b><br/>started April 1, 2016</p> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b><br/>Develop a beta version for a feedback mechanism by December 2017</p> <p>Finalize provincial agency inventories by March 2018</p>  |
| <b>Accessible and Usable</b>    | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ministry open data are made available in the Ontario Data Catalogue, which is a one-window central platform.</li> <li>Provincial agencies publish all open data on their websites or coordinate with their ministry to have open data published in the Catalogue.</li> <li>All open data is released free of charge under an open licence.</li> <li>To ensure open data can be accessed effectively by the widest range of users, Ontario is building capacity. Internal open data training sessions are supporting ministry and provincial agency staff. Public events are empowering the public to utilize Ontario’s open data.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct training sessions and host forums for government and agency staff incorporating open data charter principles</li> <li>Deliver an Open Data guidebook as a resource to build data literacy and capacity for effective release and use of open data</li> </ul>                        | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b><br/>started April 1, 2016</p> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b><br/>Conduct over 20 training sessions December 2017</p> <p>Build on OPS Open Government training framework in 2018-19</p> <p>Finalize and release the Open Data Guidebook to staff by December 2017</p> |

| Open Data Charter Principle                           | Key Activities   | Timing  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Comparable and Interoperable</b>                   | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario’s open data is released with common metadata used by the Government of Canada and other jurisdictions.</li> <li>Each dataset includes a full description and all documentation and accompanying data are written in clear, plain language in English and French.</li> <li>Ontario is engaged with other provinces and the Federal Government to explore opportunities to increase interoperability between existing standards.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with partners and international standards bodies such as the Government of Canada and the World Council on City Data to build capacity and support the creation of common standards</li> </ul>  | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b><br/>started April 1, 2016</p> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b><br/>Support the World Council on City Data to build municipal capacity throughout 2017-18</p>   |
| <b>For Improved Governance and Citizen Engagement</b> | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario engages proactively with the public, civil society and private sector to prioritize and release data. In 2013, there was a public voting exercise to determine the top 25 datasets to release. Throughout 2017 there will continue to be targeted and open engagements with Ontarians.</li> <li>The Treasury Board Secretariat provides training, tools and guidance such as the Open Data guidebook to ensure government employees are capable of using and releasing open data. In 2016, over 1000 public servants were trained. More training sessions are planned throughout 2017.</li> <li>The Deputy Minister of the Treasury Board Secretariat is responsible for reporting on OPS compliance with the Directive and on the progress of the Open Government Initiative. Progress is being tracked on Ontario.ca.</li> <li>Each ministry has implements an Open Government Action Plan. Ministries monitor their data achievements against their Ministry Plans and must work with their agencies to ensure compliance.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Open Government Partnership to submit an assessment and progress update through the Independent Reporting Mechanism</li> <li>Engage with civil society and private sector through a series of events</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b><br/>started April 1, 2016</p> <p><b><u>New Activities</u></b><br/>Ontario’s progress will be assessed by an OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism by December 2017.</p> <p>Ontario will host OpenON forums to engage citizens with open data throughout 2017</p> <p>Leverage Canadian Open Data Summit and GO Open Data in 2017</p> |
| <b>For Inclusive Development and Innovation</b>       | <p><b><u>Ongoing Activities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under the Directive, ministries and provincial agencies are required to promote data engagement with key partners.</li> <li>Ontario works with the Statistics Canada Research Data Centres, and academic institutions including the University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, and Ryerson University to support the release and promote innovative use of data, and to conduct research into the impact of Ontario’s data.</li> </ul>  | <p>Ongoing Activities started April 1, 2016</p>   |

### ***Measuring progress and compliance***

The Deputy Minister of Treasury Board Secretariat is responsible for reporting on enterprise-wide compliance with Ontario's Open Data Directive and its principles, which align with those of the Open Data Charter.

Each Ontario ministry has also developed an Open Government Action Plan. These annual Plans describe how ministries are building capacity for open data, dialogue and information.

Progress of key open government activities, including the adoption of the Charter, will be available on Ontario.ca.

At the end of 2017, Ontario's commitment to adopt the Charter will be examined at an international level by an Independent Reporting Mechanism appointed by the Open Government Partnership.





