

Legal and Policy Context

There is no federal legislation mandating spatial data infrastructure (SDI) development in Canada. Canada's commitments under the Open Government Action Plan and collaborative approach to Canada's national spatial data infrastructure, the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI) provide the frame for geospatial information management in Canada.

Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI)

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of a national spatial data infrastructure (SDI) in spurring innovation, contributing to economic growth and facilitating decision-making by governments, industry and the public. Since 1999, Canada has funded the GeoConnections program, a national initiative led by NRCan, to support the development, integration and use of the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI), Canada's spatial data infrastructure.

The CGDI is a convergence of common standards, tools, operational policies and accessible framework data layers that result in the interoperability of federal, provincial, territorial and regional SDI's, creating a navigable online system of information, data, services and applications that improves the sharing, access and use of Canadian geospatial information. With no legislative framework in place in Canada, the development of the CGDI is based upon a cooperative approach between interested organizations and different levels of government. The CGDI governance model reflects Canada's geospatial governance structure, where decision-making and the information needed to support it are distributed across a federated structure.

For more information: Canada's Spatial Data Infrastructure:

<http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earthsciences/geomatics/canadas-spatial-data-infrastructure/10783>

CGDI Resource Centre: <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geomatics/canadasspatial-data-infrastructure/8904>

Open Government

Canada's Open Government initiative aims to increase openness and accountability, strengthen democracy, and drive innovation and economic opportunities for Canadians through increased transparency. Canada joined the international Open Government Partnership (OGP) in April, 2012 and shortly thereafter produced Canada's Action Plan on Open Government consisting of 12 commitments in the areas of

- Open Information: proactive release of information on government activities;
- Open Data (See Section VI): maximization of the release of government data in a useful format to enable citizens, the private sector and non-government organizations to leverage the data in innovative and value-added ways; and
- Open Dialogue: a stronger say for Canadians in policy and priority-setting, and engagement through Web 2.0 technologies.

Canada's Action Plan is underscored by the Directive on Open Government, which provides policy direction for departments and agencies on requirements for maximizing the release of government information to the public. A new version of the draft Government of Canada Directive on Open Government and accompanying Release Criteria Checklist was issued by the Treasury Board

Secretariat in July 2014 for consultation within the Government of Canada. Changes from the previous version include stronger definitions and perspectives of the Directive's objectives and expected outcomes.

Since 2000, Canada has pioneered Open Geospatial Data following a policy decision to make geospatial data and maps available at no cost and with an unrestricted use licence. As such, approximately 261,000 of the 272,000 open datasets available on Canada's Open Data portal are geospatial data (as of June 24, 2014), and several are key and high value datasets that Canada has committed to making available under the G8 Open Data Charter. These include but are not limited to National mapping data, Canada Land Inventory, CanVec National topographic data, fuel consumption data, and forestry data.

The Federal Geospatial Platform (See Section VI) will enable the Government of Canada (GC) to meet its objectives under the Canada's Action Plan on Open Government, ensuring that the wealth of the federal government's geospatial data and information are available through an organized and accessible web presence, while providing value-added visualization capabilities.

For more information:

- G8 Open Data Charter: http://www.international.gc.ca/g8/open_datadonnees_ouvertes.aspx?lang=eng
- G8 Open Data Charter: Canada's Action Plan: <http://data.gc.ca/eng/g8-open-data-chartercanadas-action-plan>
- Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2.0 Consultation: <http://data.gc.ca/eng/consultations/open-government-action-plan-20-consultation>
- Canada's Open Data Portal: <http://data.gc.ca/data/en/dataset>
- Open Data Institute: <http://actionplan.gc.ca/en/initiative/open-data-institute>

Government of Canada Open Government License and Treasury Board Standard on Geospatial Data

Canada's commitment to Open Data enables citizens, the private sector, and non-government organizations to leverage and build upon government data in innovative and value-added ways. Based on the United Kingdom's Open Government Licence for Public Sector Information, the Open Government Licence (OGL) v. 2.0 released in May 2014, removes restrictions on the reuse of all types of published Government of Canada information (data - including geospatial data - information, websites, and publications) and aligns with international best practices to promote the re-use of federal information as widely as possible.

The Treasury Board Standard on Geospatial Data supports stewardship and interoperability of information by ensuring that departments manage, access, use and share geospatial data efficiently and effectively to support program and service delivery through the use of common, interoperable standards for data discovery and data visualization. Under the standard, Canadian federal departments must comply with the North American Profile for ISO 19115 – Metadata, 11 and must use ISO 19128 for online data visualizations using the Web Map Service (WMS) specification, when making geospatial data available online.

This standard represents a first step in normalizing the access, use and dissemination of federal geospatial data in Canada. Expansion of the Standard to include other common geospatial standards that promote interoperability in a distributed online environment are anticipated, and will ensure that Canada's most relevant information is managed in an open, interoperable, and standardized fashion. This will allow for easy integration, analysis, and mapping of information to enhance decision-making and policy development in support of government priorities.

For more information:

- Open Government License: <http://data.gc.ca/eng/open-government-licence-canada>
- Treasury Board Standard on Geospatial Data: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doceng.aspx?id=16553§ion=text>
- Canada's Open Data Portal: <http://data.gc.ca/data/en/dataset>