

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Chair and Members Audit, Finance and Administration Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: July 10, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Open and Accessible Data Policy Pilot Project (CM13012) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Chris Murray City Manager	PREPARED BY: Mike Kirkopoulos 905-546-2424 Ext. 2261
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

This Information Report is a preliminary response to the recommendation of the General Issues Committee of September 11, 2011 with respect to Open Data, Open Standards and Open Source Software:

“In pursuit of an open data policy, the City of Hamilton directs the City Manager to report back to Council on open data, including a clear definition of the term, ‘Open Data’, open standards and open source, including validating and quantifying the benefits listed above, and the implications, resources, risks and benefits of endorsing the following principles:

- **Open and Accessible Data** - the City of Hamilton would freely share with citizens, businesses and other jurisdictions the greatest amount of data possible while respecting privacy and security concerns;
- **Open Standards** - the City of Hamilton would move as quickly as possible to adopt prevailing open standards for data, documents, maps and other formats of media; and
- **Open Source Software** - the City of Hamilton, when replacing existing software or considering new applications, would place open source software on an equal footing with commercial systems during procurement cycles.”

Information:

Many Canadian municipalities are adopting Open Data programs, Open Standards and Open Source Software in response to citizen demands for more open and transparent government and in an effort to enable collaborations between governments and citizens, educational institutions and technology industries. These efforts have in many cases led to improved service delivery for citizens and businesses, and have enabled some services to be provided at a reduced cost.

For an understanding of the three concepts, definitions are provided below:

- **Open Data** is a philosophy and practice requiring that certain data are made available to the public, without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control, for free and in a machine-readable format. Data that is made available in this way is generally free of private information and is commonly owned and managed by a government institution. Open Data requires that data not only be made available, but that it is made available in a standardized and accessible format, where ever possible.
- **Open Standards** refer to a shared policy framework and common practices used to ensure Open Data is released and maintained in a method that enables maximum compatibility, accessibility and usability.
- **Open Source Software (OSS)** refers to software where the source code is made available and licensed with an open source license in which the copyright holder provides the rights to study, change or distribute the software for free to anyone for any purpose. While OSS is generally free to acquire and modify, an organization may still encounter costs related to the adoption and use of OSS.

The City's web redevelopment team is currently considering the matter of Open Source Software as part of their work on technological considerations for the City's new website, and will be updating the Web Redevelopment and Service Channel Sub-Committee on this matter in the near future.

This Information Report mainly concerns the adoption of an Open Data framework for the City of Hamilton. As part of the exploration of Open Data, the concept of Open Standards would also be studied, and considerations would be part of the report back following the completion of the recommended Open Data pilot. This would look at the risk, benefits and resource implications as well as consult with the web-redevelopment strategy team and sub-committee on any additional considerations.

The Open Data movement is gaining momentum worldwide with significant steps being taken by governments at all levels in North America and Europe. In the public sphere,

the goal of open data is to remove barriers to accessing information created or managed by government institutions, while respecting privacy, legal and other concerns. Cities across the world have benefited from Open Data initiatives by being able to harness the creativity of citizens who would create free or low-cost, innovative ways of using or repurposing government data in ways that government may not have the resources or the capability of doing itself.

In establishing priorities around Open Data, and which data sets are easily shared and made available, several items would be considered:

- (1) Functionality available in current systems
- (2) Cost, feasibility and potential benefit(s) of implementing Open Data – i.e. ease of publication
- (3) Resource implications to release and maintain data in a standardized format
- (4) Requirements around protecting privacy, security and data integrity
- (5) Data ownership/Data considered to be public under Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)
- (6) Policy framework for use of data (in collaboration with other municipalities)

In approving an Open Data initiative, the City of Hamilton would send a strong signal to the community at large, as well as individuals and companies in the digital media industry that the City is open for business and is committed to transparency, accountability, accessibility of information, community engagement and innovation.

Staff believes that in order to be successful, we must take an iterative approach, releasing data incrementally while measuring and learning on an ongoing basis. In addition to being more consistent with the values of Open Data; this has the material benefit of:

- a) getting data into the public faster,
- b) incorporating lessons learned from data deployment and
- c) including the local Open Data community more directly in developing and fine-tuning best practices.

A pilot initiative would be undertaken to release a modest number of high priority data sets, and over the next year to eighteen months, Staff would monitor the use of the data sets, with reports on progress, ease of implementation, any resource limitations and implications all reported back to Council.

A staff working group would be established with representatives from the following Departments/Divisions, reporting through the City Manager's Office:

- Corporate Communications/Departmental Communications
- Information Technology
- City Clerk's Office

- City Solicitor's Office (Legal)
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS – a subset of IT, Public Works and Planning)
- Hamilton Public Library
- Any additional departments or agencies as required.

The Working Group would monitor the progress of the Open Data initiative, including the use of the data sets, as well as planned future releases. The following responsibilities and principles would be the mandate of the working group:

- Develop criteria to guide decision-making around what data sets may be released.
- Release agreed upon data sets with the necessary Open Data Commons Public Domain Dedication and License (PDDL) in place.
- Monitor the use of the data, and develop and release new data sets in accordance with the established criteria.
- Evaluate future costs, staff resources and time necessary to develop or convert and maintain open data sets.
- Continue to liaise with members of the community who are experienced with and have expressed an interest in Open Data initiatives.
- Review applicable Legislation and Policies concerning:
 - (i) Information & Privacy Commissioner's core concepts as they relate to Privacy by Design and Access by Design
 - (ii) Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)
 - (ii) Copyright and intellectual property issues
 - (iii) Records management
 - (iv) Code of Conduct
 - (v) Computer Acceptable Use
 - (vi) Any professional or contractual obligations pertaining to data sharing
- Incorporate any appropriate safeguards to ensure privacy of information is maintained

Some of the potential benefits of this pilot initiative and examples of successes in other communities are indicated below:

- Economic development – In Vancouver, a local group of software developers created an online waste collection calendar using data provided by the city through an Open Data initiative. Based on the success of that project, a company was formed that now sells the software to municipalities across North America, including to Halton Region. This has created opportunities for new economic development and jobs for the local economy.
- Innovative new services for citizens – Using open transit data provided in a standardized format, many communities have developed transit applications (apps) for mobile devices to provide improved access to transit schedules and information for transit riders who have a smart phone device.
- Social and neighbourhood development – By accessing and merging data from a number of open sources, as was done with the Code Red study, new insights can be identified to provide community-sponsored improvements and assist with social and neighbourhood collaboration, planning and development.
- Internal efficiencies – By committing to an Open Data initiative, many municipalities have been able to improve their own internal processes for maintaining City-owned or City-managed data sets, and in some cases, Open Data initiatives have also led to improved quality of City-owned data through collaboration with the community.

Progress Report Timeframes:

The Working Group would provide progress reports to the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee on a semi-annual basis commencing with the Committee meeting of September 9, 2013.