

Open Data MOU brings more information, accessibility and innovation to Nova Scotians

HALIFAX, NS (December 14, 2016) – Nova Scotians will now have easier access to more data sets and information as part of a collaborative new Open Data initiative.

Representatives from the provincial government, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM), the Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today to find ways to harness the potential of Open Data in the province.

“Whether you are a private citizen looking for information, an academic researcher or an entrepreneur looking to create a great new app, more Open Data is good news for Nova Scotia,” said Hon. Labi Kousoulis, Nova Scotia Minister of Internal Services. “Since Nova Scotia joined the open data movement earlier this year, our portal has been viewed more than 300,000 times and our citizens are better informed.”

Already, existing Open Data sites promoted by the Province and Halifax have helped spur the development of apps and websites for everything from transit to garbage collection to real estate.

“Halifax understands the importance of Open Data, having already created our own portal in 2014,” said Mike Savage, Mayor of Halifax. “For Nova Scotia to fully realize the potential of Open Data, we will need leadership and mutual support from all governments.”

The MOU formally establishes the creation of the Nova Scotia Open Data Council. The Council’s role is to identify opportunities for collaboration and consultation across government and business sectors; to educate, communicate, and provide research on best practices in Open Data; and to provide strategic advice on how to best use and promote Open Data in the province.

Greg Keefe has been appointed Chair of the Council. Keefe has previously served as a deputy minister in the provincial government and as CFO of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

“The principles of Open Data align with intentions of transparency, accountability and accessibility that municipal governments want to provide and Nova Scotians deserve,” said Laurie Murley, President of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

A new website, known as **datazONE**, www.thedatazone.ca, is central to the Open Data Council’s effort. For the initial launch today, the portal includes data and information from the PVSC and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), and also connects to data sets available on both Halifax’s and the Municipality of East Hants’s open data sites. Other municipal governments are expected to provide data sets to **datazONE** in the months ahead. **datazONE** is funded, managed and administered by the PVSC.

“We live in a time where people expect to access data at their fingertips,” said Greg Keefe, Chair, Nova Scotia Open Data Council. “The **datazONE** portal does just that. We are confident it can become a place

to fuel innovators and developers, and a destination for anyone looking for property and municipal data sets and information in Nova Scotia.”

Follow @thedatazone on Twitter to stay in the **zONE** on the newest data sets and information available.

Interviews are available upon request.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is Open Data?

A: The term open data refers to any data set distributed in a form that allows use, reuse, redistribution and manipulation without restrictions from copyright, patents or other mechanisms of control.

Q: Who owns the datazONE website?

A: Under the direction of the Integrated Property Services Council (IPSC) and the guidance of the Nova Scotia Open Data Council, the datazONE website is funded, managed and administered by the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC). There is no direct cost for municipalities to participate in this service.

Q: Are municipalities required to use datazONE as a tool to share data and information?

A: No. Use of datazONE is an option available to municipalities. Some municipalities already provide access to data through their own open data websites. datazONE is available to all municipalities at no cost. datazONE can also link to other open data sites.

Q: What can I find on the datazONE website?

A: The datazONE website has a variety of property and municipal data sets from the PVSC and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), and also connects to data sets available on both Halifax's and the Municipality of East Hants's open data sites. Other municipal governments are expected to provide data sets to datazONE in the months ahead.

Q. What data sets are in the data catalogue right now?

A: From the PVSC, data sets include: Assessed Value and Taxable Assessed Value History; Parcel Sales History; Parcel Land Sizes; and Residential Dwelling Characteristics.

From CBRM, data sets include: Building Footprints; Federal/Provincial Contributory Projects; Municipal Electoral District Boundaries; and Yearly Operating Budget.

Q: How often will datazONE be updated with new data sets?

A: Data sets can be submitted to the review committee at any time. The committee will meet quarterly to review new data set submissions. Once approved, the data set will be uploaded to datazONE. There may times throughout the year when data sets are released outside of this schedule.

Follow @thedatazONE on Twitter to receive up-to-date information on new data sets.

Q: What role does the Nova Scotia Open Data Council play in the datazONE portal?

A: The Council will actively promote the use of datazONE as it seeks opportunities to promote collaboration and consultation across government and business sectors and educate on open data best practices.

Q: Who makes up the Nova Scotia Open Data Council?

A: Current Membership includes representation from:

- The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- The Municipality of East Hants
- The Province
- Academia
- Property Valuation Services Corporation

Q: How is the datazONE website funded?

A: PVSC allocated resources from its Technology Advancement Fund to set up and secure the website, hosted by Socrata, an international open data service provider. Operationally, the website is being managed and administered by current PVSC staff.

Q: How was Socrata selected as the open data service provider?

A: As the administrator of the service, PVSC released a Request For Proposals (RFP) seeking an open data service provider. Socrata was selected after meeting the criteria set out in the RFP.

Q: What kind of privacy review processes do data sets undergo before being published?

A: Suppliers of data sets are required to review all data sets and information to ensure that they do not contain any personally identifiable information. An Open Data checklist is completed for each data set, and a review committee provides an additional level of validation to ensure that data sets adhere to privacy and data sharing policy standards.

Q: Does datazONE adhere to the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) legislation?

A: Suppliers of data sets are responsible for adhering to the MGA, FOIPOP and any other applicable legislation. Additionally, a review committee has been established to review each data set as an additional level of validation to ensure that data sets adhere to privacy and data sharing policy standards.

Q: Who makes up the review committee?

A: The review committee is made up of municipal and PVSC representatives.