

Open Data

(D. Iveson)

Recommendation:

That the December 23, 2009, Corporate Services Department report 2010COT001 be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides an update regarding ongoing initiatives to provide municipal information to the public in open, non proprietary formats. Open data provides this information in a format that allows for much easier analysis and integration with other systems that are of interest to the public.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the October 14, 2009, City Council meeting, Councillor D. Iveson made the following inquiry:

In local, national and sub-national governments around the world there is a trend toward making up-to-date government information freely available on-line in generically accessible data formats as so-called "Open Data."

- 1) What level of awareness does the City Administration have regarding Open Data in municipal government?
- 2) What current initiatives are underway within City Administration that might qualify under the spirit of Open Data?
- 3) What further initiatives are under consideration within the City, and on what basis are they being

evaluated?

- 4) Is Administration monitoring any successes and or challenges with this trend in other jurisdictions, especially large Canadian cities, and if so what can be shared with Council?
- 5) What would City Administration's recommendation be on next steps regarding Open Data plans or strategies?

Report

Administration is very aware of open data in municipal government in North America and other regions in the world. The Chief Information Officer and senior IT Branch staff have been actively following developments in "Open" and are actively participating in the "Open Data" movement in Canada and the United States.

Open Data is the term used when organizations make information available in a form that can be read by computer software for the purpose of integrating that information into other systems, or extending the usefulness of the information by combining it with other relevant information.

In February of 2009, the Edmonton Transit System made transit route information available on the City's website as part of the Google Transit partnership. The transit route information is available in an open data format. When information like this is made available to the public, one action that results is the development of software applications that extend the usefulness of the information. By accessing the Google Transit information, a group of Edmonton based software developers have recently

created an application for the iPhone that provides location based next bus / LRT information. The application is called MyStops (mystopsapp.com) and has been expanded to two other cities in Canada and 18 cities in the United States. This software was developed using the information provided by the City and at no cost (initial or ongoing) to the City.

The City of Edmonton IT Branch, in partnership with other city departments, has developed an online open data catalog. This catalog is made up of data from the city's website. Until now the data has been loaded onto the website in forms such as web lists and PDF files that are not accessible by software programs. The IT Branch continues to look for opportunities to add to the online data catalog.

On November 21, 2009, the City of Edmonton IT Branch hosted an Open Data workshop for the community to start the conversation on Open Data and to also secure insights from the community. Over 45 people were in attendance at the workshop. Workshop participants discussed what has been developed in other cities and how it can be leveraged and used within Edmonton. Currently senior Information Technology branch staff are engaging internal staff within city departments to explore which departmental and corporate information can be made "open."

Within Canada the municipalities that are most active regarding open data are Nanaimo, Vancouver and Toronto. These municipalities have a combination of city/community led initiatives underway. The cities of

Calgary and Ottawa are in the process of developing plans and associated policies around open data.

Administration is considering further initiatives related to open data. An Open Strategy is in development and will be complete in the second quarter of 2010. This strategy will include detailed plans on initiatives and their associated evaluation criteria. The strategy will identify opportunities as well as risks related to open data. Consideration will also be given to the ongoing support and management of this type of a system, or approach to sharing information. Administration is also planning on releasing additional open data in February 2010 and inviting the Edmonton IT community to develop useful software applications using the data.

Administration will provide regular updates to City Council through the Executive Committee regarding Open Data and the associated strategy. In June 2010 Administration will also hold citizen information sessions to engage the broader community to ensure understanding of the direction and awareness of the opportunity.

Note

This report was created from information provided by 39 contributors who had access to a shared document on Google Docs. When the inquiry was made, Administration decided that the report would be written in an open forum to create a way to engage the community in developing the report.

Attachments

1. Open Data Initiative – Program Plan

Web Links

2. [Google Open Collaboration File Link](http://tinyurl.com/y9ccktv)
<http://tinyurl.com/y9ccktv>
3. [November 21 Open Data Workshop Link](http://tinyurl.com/yf29tus)
<http://tinyurl.com/yf29tus>

Open Data Initiative – Program Plan

Critical Milestones

21 November 2009 - #yegdata open data workshop
Workshop to start the open data conversation with the community
Also used meeting to validate program assumptions and program focus for open data.

January 2010 - Open Data catalogue
Initial release of City of Edmonton data currently available on Edmonton.ca

January 2010 - Utility and Partner sessions
Sessions with our utility and organisational partners with which we already have relationships for data procurement and sharing.

February 2010 - Public Involvement Plan
Public involvement plan for the open data initiative.

February – April 2010 - Edmonton applications competition
Competition for use of data released by Edmonton including official launch of City of Edmonton data catalogue. Information from the competition will be used to prioritise additional data sets for release.

March - April 2010 - Open Data Strategy
Development and approval of open data strategy for the City of Edmonton including public involvement.

May 2010 – Open Data Administrative Directive
Development and approval by Senior Management Team & City Manager.

May – June 2010 - Open Data Road Show
Citizen and vendor sessions to communicate the open data strategy.