Open City Network

Brief for Cities

January 2020

The **Open City Network** (OCN) is a not for profit organization working to protect democratic institutions and modernize cities at scale. It is mobilizing to build an Open City Platform (OCP): a blend of standards and digital public infrastructure which will ensure a responsible, democratic technology future for our cities.

Canada's municipalities have extensive experience, regulations and policy for building the physical parts of our cities. But municipal operations increasingly require new digital infrastructure, where the rules are far less clear, and where we have less understanding of the implications, or what we might be giving away.

Over time, our cities face a risk, that one vendor may control smart city infrastructure, reducing public control over our systems and data, eroding the public sector's ability to govern itself, and constricting its ability to implement public policy choices. The Toronto Quayside project has also shown that we cannot rely on large private actors to build this world fully in the public interest.

The solution is the one adopted by the world's leading democratic e-government jurisdictions: a technology core, built to be publicly governed, maintained, and responsive to society: an Open City Platform (OCP).

The **Open City Platform** is a blend of:

- standards: on data governance, generation and exchange, and;
- digital public infrastructure: public, open exchange protocols and technology architecture.

The OCP will:

- Eliminate the democratic risk posed to cities from the front lines of technology;
- Drive the modernization of cities at scale, by delivering the major digital public works at the heart of smart cities: networked and scalable systems that emphasize the interoperability of government and strong public governance;
- Generate standards to be used as a procurement requirement, or a roadmap for responsible smart city technology development.

How we'll get there

We're taking three steps to achieve the Open City Platform:

1. Discovery and Coalition Building: Current phase.
2. Standards Development: On data governance, generation and exchange, through our partnership with the CIO Strategy Council.
3. Digital Infrastructure Build: Stand up early digital public infrastructure that will underpin the Open City Platform.

Why get involved?

Current technology means cities now face national public policy challenges in areas like data, innovation, digital infrastructure, privacy, digital rights and inclusion, economic development and more. The Quayside project has shown that these issues are on our cities' doorstep. But most can't reasonably tackle these alone, nor are our they resourced to build the digital infrastructure needed to responsibly realize ambitious smart city visions.

In these first phases of our work, the OCN is an engine for discovery, coalition building and standards development at the intersection of cities, democracy and technology. Membership in the Open City Network does not commit anyone to anything; cities can join in as observers, full participants, or anywhere in between. The OCN makes space for leaders and learners, because we do not have all the answers: only a working coalition across the public, private and NGO sectors can tackle this national challenge.

For the later work of building the Open City Platform, technology for the public realm should be built with and for users, on strong public policy and governance foundations. With cities as the ultimate users of the OCP, here is a partial list of what a city might do:

- Join user experience research and discovery;
- Help solve public policy issues related to deploying current technology in the public realm;
- Ensure new technology standards are empathetic to municipalities, and can be practically applied in municipal operations;
- Learn from Canadian technology leaders about what's happening on the front lines of tech;
- Influence the agenda of the Open City Network and the technology future of Canada's cities;
- Serve as eventual development and deployment partners for the OCP.

OCN membership

London CANADA

MIOVISION

CODE for CANADA

invest STRATFORD
Globally Connected | Community Driven

esri Canada

Compute · Calcul Ontario

**Jenna Sudds,
Councillor,
City of Ottawa**

**Michael Thompson,
Deputy Mayor,
City of Toronto**

mappedin

GEOTAB
management by measurement

radical.io

TELUS Insights

Funding and governance

We are a member-supported not-for-profit organization. The OCN received one-time start up support in 2019 from [Compute Ontario](#), not-for-profit funded by Ontario's [Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade](#).

Our Board of Directors includes public, private and not-for-profit organizations:

miovision	**Kurtis McBride, CEO**	**invest STRATFORD**	**Joani Gerber, CEO**
CODE for CANADA	**Charles Finley, Chair**	**GEOTAB**	**Mike Branch, VP of Data and Analytics**
Ottawa	**Jenna Sudds, City Councillor**	**esri Canada**	**Alex Miller, CEO**
mappedin	**Hongwei Liu, CEO**		

Partnerships

CIO STRATEGY COUNCIL

Contact Us

The Executive Director of the Open City Network is Andy Best (abest@theopencity.org). We're also on Twitter ([Andy](#), [OCN](#)) and [LinkedIn](#).