



August 26, 2016

Brian Fior, (Acting) Director  
Open Government Office  
Treasury Board Secretariat  
77 Wellesley Street West, 8th Floor Ferguson Block  
Toronto, ON, M7A 1N3

Dear Mr. Fior,

We are writing to express our interest in contributing to the Government of Ontario's Open government consultation.

The Ontario Nonprofit Network's (ONN) vision is to support thriving communities and a dynamic province through a strong and resilient nonprofit sector. We are the provincial network for the 55,000 nonprofit organizations across the province of Ontario. ONN brings the diverse voices of the sector to government, funders and the business sector to create and influence systemic change. ONN activates its volunteer base and the network to develop and analyze policy, and work on strategic issues through its working groups, engagement of nonprofits and charities and government.

In February 2016, we wrote a letter in support of Ontario joining the Open Government Partnership's pilot program. As we noted then, we have heard strong support from our Open Data colleagues about the OGP initiative.

With respect to the next steps, we propose a **joint working group comprised of the Treasury Board Secretariat, key ministries, nonprofit stakeholders and key municipalities and researchers focused on the use of data for public benefit**. This working group would review data collection, data sets, data use, and ways to fill gaps or create new data sets for public benefit research and planning. The joint working group would act as a means to identify issues and opportunities relating to the nonprofit sector, which will open up the opportunity for nonprofits, government, and other stakeholders to further learn, analyze, and work together on issues of common concern.

We would also like to note our concern that the process currently set up for this consultation does not allow for meaningful engagement with the nonprofit sector. In particular, we believe that a process that starts with a limited online submission form and subsequent voting system does not allow for a meaningful discussion of the issues around data and open government and will instead lead to a popularity contest based on good sales pitches. In essence, we feel that this process is putting the cart before the horse and should instead focus on bringing key stakeholders together to identify priorities first.

We believe that for the OGP to be a success, strong consultation between the government and its partners is necessary. ONN has considerable experience working with government in this regard. The Joint Funding Reform Forum is an example of this approach. For example, a “think tank day” was co-hosted in summer 2015 by ONN and the TPAM (Transfer Payment Administrative Modernization) Office to gather information on administrative costs in transfer payment agreements. In winter 2016, funding reform stakeholders in the nonprofit sector and the Ontario Public Service co-developed a set of principles designed to guide the work of the TPAM Office. In July 2016, nonprofits were brought together in a focus group to discuss improvements to the Grants Ontario online portal. This type of collaborative approach involving deliberation and discussion often results in a more nuanced approach to government initiatives than a survey ever could.

The nonprofit sector plays a key role in building connections between individual community members and the government, for example, by sharing information about new government initiatives as well as delivering government programs and services. In addition, nonprofits act as repositories of knowledge and facilitates conversations and collective analysis of community trends and issues. In this work, nonprofits both collect key data sets and use data to inform their work. For these reasons, nonprofits have an essential role to play in the transition from closed data to data that is not only open, but actively accessed and used to provide innovative solutions and benefit Ontarians.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input, and we look forward to working with you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cathy" being more prominent than the last name "Taylor".

Cathy Taylor  
Executive Director