

Public Health

Agence de la santé Agency of Canada publique du Canada

Access to Information and Privacy Division 7th Floor, Suite 700, Holland Cross - Tower B 1600 Scott Street, (Mail Stop: 3107A) Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

2023-05-15

Our file: PHAC-A-2020-000412 / MLD

Connect

Office of Damien C. Kurek, MP

Camrose, Alberta T4V

This is in response to your request made under the Access to Information Act (the Act) for the following information:

Open and Transparent Sharing of COVID-19 Data Briefing Note: Ref # 20-115835-439 Title: Open and Transparent Sharing of COVID-19 Data Received: Nov. 19, 2020 Organization: Public Health Agency of Canada Sector: Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Branch Addressee: Deputy head (including a person appointed to a position of an equivalent rank) Action Required: For Decision.

Enclosed please find records responsive to your request. You will note that portions of the records are withheld from disclosure pursuant to section 19 of the Act. For ease of reference, a copy of the Act may be found at https://lawslois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-1/ which provides a description of the redactions applied.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the processing of your request or wish to be provided with a paper copy of these records, please do not hesitate to contact Mathieu Lévesque-Dupéré, the analyst responsible for this file, either by phone at or by email at with reference to our file number cited above.

Please be advised that you are entitled to complain to the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada concerning the processing of your request within 60 days of the receipt of this notice. In the event you decide to avail yourself of this right, your notice of complaint can be made online at: https://www.oic-ci.gc.ca/en/submittingcomplaint or by mail to:

Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada

Gatineau, Quebec K1A 1H3

Yours sincerely,

Digitally signed by lavigne, sophie

Foxit PDF Editor Version: 12.1.0

Sophie Lavigne

Team Leader, Access to Information and Privacy

Enclosure:

PDF (pp. 1-16)



### FOR CONCURRENCE

20-115835-439

### MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

Open and Transparent Sharing of COVID-19 Data / Partage ouvert et transparent des données liées à la COVID-19

### SUMMARY

- Since March 2020, a COVID-19 Task Team of geographers, analysts, statisticians and managers formed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), and Statistics Canada (StatCan) has been delivering COVID-19 situational awareness products for internal and public use, and has published dozens of open COVID-19-related data sets to the Open Government portal.
- On May 27, 2020, Treasury Board (TB) President Jean-Yves Duclos sent a letter to Cabinet Ministers (Appendix A) reminding them of the importance of maintaining strong information management and urged them to publish valuable COVID-19-related data to the Open Government portal.
- On the recommendation of Chief Statistician Anil Arora, a joint letter was
  prepared with the objective of informing Treasury Board Secretary Peter Wallace
  of this collaboration and to congratulate respective departments for their
  contributions to Open Government. No further commitments are outlined in the
  letter.
- It is recommended that you sign the attached letter as a show of support for all involved including our partners at StatCan and NRCan (Appendix B).

#### BACKGROUND:

The sudden onset of the COVID-19 epidemic in Canada, and the crucial need for public situational awareness, presented an urgent cross-departmental requirement to create and deliver authoritative information, maps and dashboards to government decision-makers and the public.



Page: 1 of/de 16 A2020000412 In March 2020, a COVID-19 Task Team was initiated by PHAC, StatCan and NRCan to meet this requirement. This grassroots effort mobilized top subject matter experts, such as statisticians and geospatial experts, to provide the capacity required to meet the need for this information. The key focus of the COVID-19 Task Team has been the publication of COVID-related data in the form of geospatial layers or tables that are sharable to the Open Government portal.

The COVID-19 Task Team involved participation from the following areas of the health portfolio:

- Health Geomatics Unit, National Microbiology Lab, Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Branch, PHAC;
- Data, Partnership and Innovation Hub, Corporate Data and Surveillance Branch, PHAC;
- Surveillance Systems and Data Management Division/Infobase team, Health Promotion Chronic Disease Prevention Branch, PHAC; and,
- Digital Communication team and Web publishing team, Communications and Public Affairs Branch, Health Canada.

On May 27, 2020, TB President Jean-Yves Duclos sent a message to Cabinet Ministers (Attachment A) reminding them of the importance of maintaining strong information management and of publishing valuable COVID-related data to the Open Government portal. At the end of July, Task Team Directors sent an email to their respective Vice-Presidents/Assistant Deputy Ministers on their contributions to Open Government, which sparked the interest of Chief Statistician Anil Arora to brief Treasury Board Secretary Peter Wallace on this work.

### CONSIDERATIONS:

The three federal departments, PHAC, StatCan, and NRCan, played key roles on the Task Team. As such, we consider it appropriate that a trilateral letter is sent as a response to the request of TB President Duclos.

Through this collaborative, StatCan provided data for modelling and dashboards; NRCan supported the development of geospatial web services and contributed expertise to support dashboard production; and PHAC produced a number of maps and dashboards, which have been published on the Canada.ca website. The main web page, *Epidemiological and Economic Research Data*, received a total of 317K visits since June 4, 2020. Nested within this main page are the <u>Visual Data Gallery</u> and the <u>International</u> Map pages. In addition, the communications and Infobase teams have coordinated the release of many datasets. The data provided by PHAC to the Open Data Portal reflect datasets owned by PHAC and not data for which we are custodians on behalf of others from whom we would require permission to proceed.

Going forward, there may be an interest in PHAC providing the COVID-19 Case Data Set for the TB Open Data Portal; however, since PHAC does not own this data,

consultation with provincial and territorial (PTs) public health authorities would be required as per our Multi-Lateral Information Sharing Agreement (MLISA). PHAC is proceeding with the next iterations of its own data portal through which we aim to provide the data set once appropriately treated for privacy considerations for public and research purposes. Consultations with PT authorities on the posting of the data set for public use will therefore continue, and provision to the TB Open Data Portal considered.

### RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSION:

( 14 )

It is recommended that you indicate your concurrence by signing the attached trilateral letter to Secretary Wallace, providing information on this important interdepartmental contribution to Open Government and congratulating all involved on a successful and continued collaboration.

	Nov. 19, 2020
Branch Head	Date
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President	
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Date	
MECS# 20-115835-439	•
Contact: Telephone:	
Attachments Appendix A – Email letter from Trea	sury Board President, the

Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, to all ministers, subject "The importance

Statistician Anil Anora, (former) PHAC President Tina Namiesniowski,

of openness and transparency during this unprecedented Crisis"

Appendix B – Trilateral Letter to Treasury Board Secretary Peter Wallace from Chief

and Deputy Minister of NRCan

Page: 3 of/de 16 A2020000412

Information Act by the Public Health Agency of Canada / Document divulgué en vertu de la Loi su l'accès à l'information par l'Agence de la santé publique du Canada

### Sharpe, Janice (NRCAN/RNCAN)

From: President of the Treasury Board/Président du Conseil du Trésor

**Sent:** May 27, 2020 11:55

To: Minister Bains / Minister Bains

(IC); Minister (AADNC/AANDC); Minister / Ministre (AAFC/AAC); Minister of Public Safety / Ministre de la Sécurité publique (PS/SP); Chagger, Honorable Bardish (PCH);

, Minister Mona Fortier (FIN); Ministre

des Transports, Minister of Transport (Ext.);

Guilbeault, Honorable Steven (PCH); ministresc, Minister / Ministre hcminister (HC/SC);

Minister Joly / Ministre Joly (IC);

; Minister-Ministre (VAC/ACC); Executive

Correspondence / Correspondance exécutive (INFC):

, MinistreSA / MinisterIS (AADNC/AANDC);

Gov. / Ministre du Gouv. numérique; Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion /

Ministre de la Petite Entreprise et de la Promotion des exportations (IC); Ng\_INT, Mary (Ext.); Office of the Minister / Bureau du Ministre (NRCAN/RNCAN); EDSC.EDMIPH-

Ministre AN - Minister NA (AADNC/AANDC);

Ministre / Minister (EC)

The importance of openness and transparency during this unprecedented crisis -

L'importance de l'ouverture et de la transparence pendant cette crise sans précédent

UNCLASSIFIED / NON CLASSIFIÉ

(La version française suit)

Dear colleagues:

Subject:

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your continuing efforts to respond to the unprecedented public health crisis posed by COVID-19. Extraordinary efforts are being made across the entire government, both to respond to the pandemic and to maintain government operations, and I am grateful for your work and that of the entire public service. As you lead your institutions through these exceptional circumstances, I would like to remind you of the continuing importance of providing transparency and accountability to Canadians, even in times of crisis. It is paramount to the confidence of Canadians in the institutions that serve them.

While our attention is rightly focused on responding to the pandemic and mitigating its impact on Canadians and our economy, we must keep in mind the importance of documenting government decisions in these unprecedented times in a way that ensures accountability and reflects our values of openness and transparency. The Prime Minister highlighted our shared commitment to open, effective and transparent government in each of our mandate letters. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, I shared with the Information Commissioner of Canada our commitment to maintaining strong information management systems to meet our obligations to Canadians.

As many of our offices and departmental employees are now working remotely, and those carrying out non-essential work have been asked to minimize the use of government networks, it is important that we are all reminded of the importance of managing government information securely and effectively. Proper information management practices will ensure that information can be used to support decision-making and improve services for Canadians, while also upholding Canadians' right to access Government of Canada information, and ensuring that the privacy of personal information is protected.

To assist your organizations in this regard, I remind you that the Policy and Dilaspès è l'istromation pardiageant date santé effect on April 1, 2020 and outlines a number of requirements in respect of the Heliasperite Repartion and data as a strategic asset of the Government of Canada. The Chief Information Officers of your institutions have specific accountabilities, working collaboratively with other officials across your organization to implement the Policy. Guidance for all employees was published on April 29, 2020 on Canada.ca as a reminder of our collective responsibilities on information management.

These responsibilities include effectively managing and safeguarding Government of Canada information in their care, documenting activities and decisions of business value, identifying what information has business value, and ensuring that this information is stored in designated corporate repositories. It also means ensuring that information is communicated and managed securely, and in accordance with its sensitivity.

I understand that workplace measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and well-being of federal employees and the public has had an impact on institutions' ability to respond to access to information requests. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has issued guidance to institutions to encourage them to continue to make best efforts to respond to requests, in accordance with operational realities in their organization; and to make best efforts to advise requesters of possible delays given reduced capacity.

Finally, I wish to note the importance of proactive publication of information related to the pandemic to provide transparency to Canadians. As announced by the Prime Minister on April 17, 2020, the Government has committed to making information related to COVID-19 proactively available online using the Open Government Portal. The Portal will host open data on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit as a start and continue to increase open data holdings as they become available. I am encouraging Ministers to have their institutions proactively publish as much information as possible on the Open Government Portal as soon as is feasible for your institution.

The upcoming review of the *Access to Information Act* will be an opportunity to have an open exchange of ideas on how to maintain the openness and transparency of government, and I look forward to our continued collaboration in that regard.

I want to conclude by thanking you again for your continuing efforts to respond to the unprecedented public health crisis posed by COVID-19 in accordance with our values of providing effective, transparent and accountable government for Canadians.

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P. / c.p., député
President of the Treasury Board
Président du Conseil du Trésor
*********************

Chers collègues,

Tout d'abord, je tiens à vous remercier des efforts continus que vous déployez afin de répondre à la crise de santé publique qu'est la COVID-19. Des efforts extraordinaires sont déployés à l'échelle du gouvernement pour répondre à la pandémie et appuyer les opérations du gouvernement, et je vous suis reconnaissant de votre travail, de même que de celui de la fonction publique tout entière. Alors que vous guidez vos institutions à travers ces circonstances exceptionnelles, je désire vous rappeler l'importance continue de la transparence et de la responsabilisation à l'égard des Canadiens, même en période de crise. Ceci est primordial pour maintenir la confiance qu'ont les Canadiens à l'égard des institutions qui les servent.

Bien que notre attention se concentre à juste titre sur la réponse à la pandémie et sur l'atténuation de ses répercussions sur les Canadiens et notre économie, nous ne devons pas perdre de vue l'importance de documenter les décisions du gouvernement en cette période sans précédent, de façon à assurer la responsabilisation et à respecter nos valeurs en matière d'ouverture et de transparence. Le premier ministre a souligné notre engagement commun envers un gouvernement ouvert, efficace et transparent, dans chacune de nos lettres de mandat. Le 5 mai, j'ai partagé avec la commissaire à l'information du Canada notre engagement à l'égard du maintien de solides systèmes de gestion de l'information afin de respecter nos obligations envers les Canadiens.

Alors qu'un grand nombre de nos employés ministériels travaillent maintenant avaité maintenant avait non essentiel aient à minimiser leur utilisation du réseau du gouvernement de façon sécuritaire et efficace. L'adoption de pratiques exemplaires en matière de gestion de l'information garantit l'utilisation de celle-ci en vue d'appuyer les prises de décisions et d'améliorer les services offerts aux Canadiens, tout en respectant le droit des citoyens d'accéder aux informations du gouvernement du Canada, et en protégeant les renseignements personnels afin de respecter la vie privée.

À cette fin, et pour aider votre organisation, je vous rappelle que la <u>Politique sur les services et le numérique</u> est entrée en vigueur le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 2020, et qu'elle décrit un certain nombre d'exigences ayant trait à la gestion de l'information et aux données à titre d'actifs stratégiques du gouvernement du Canada. Les dirigeants principaux de l'information de vos institutions assument des responsabilités très précises, en collaboration avec d'autres représentants qui proviennent de l'ensemble de votre organisation, en vue de procéder à la mise en œuvre de la Politique. Une <u>orientation</u> à l'intention de tous les employés a été publiée le 29 avril 2020 dans le site canada.ca en guise de rappel quant à leurs responsabilités collectives en matière de gestion de l'information.

Ces responsabilités comprennent une gestion et une protection efficaces de l'information du gouvernement du Canada sous leur contrôle, la documentation des activités et des décisions ayant une valeur opérationnelle, l'identification de l'information qui a une valeur opérationnelle, et l'assurance que cette information soit stockée dans des répertoires ministériels. Cela signifie également le fait de veiller à ce que l'information soit communiquée et gérée de façon sécuritaire, conformément à son niveau de sensibilité.

Je suis conscient que les mesures prises en milieu de travail pour atténuer la propagation de la COVID-19 et pour protéger la santé et le bien-être des fonctionnaires fédéraux et du public ont eu une incidence sur la capacité des institutions de répondre aux demandes d'accès à l'information. Le Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor du Canada a publié une orientation à l'intention des institutions afin de les encourager à continuer de faire tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour répondre aux demandes – tout en tenant compte des réalités opérationnelles de leur organisation – et pour informer les demandeurs des retards possibles, en raison des capacités réduites.

Enfin, je tiens à souligner l'importance d'une publication proactive de l'information sur la pandémie afin de veiller à ce que la transparence soit évidente aux yeux des Canadiens. Comme l'a annoncé le premier ministre le 17 avril 2020, le gouvernement s'est engagé à rendre disponible l'information relative à la COVID-19 de façon proactive par l'entremise du Portail du gouvernement ouvert qui est accessible en ligne. Ce Portail hébergera les données ouvertes sur la Prestation canadienne d'urgence à titre de point de départ, et continuera d'augmenter le nombre de données ouvertes qu'il détient, au fur et à mesure qu'elles sont disponibles. J'encourage les ministres à demander à leurs institutions de publier le plus d'information possible dans le Portail du gouvernement ouvert et ce, aussi rapidement que possible pour votre institution.

Le prochain examen de la *Loi sur l'accès à l'information* sera une occasion d'échanger des idées sur la façon d'appuyer l'ouverture et la transparence du gouvernement, et i'ai hâte de collaborer avec vous à cet égard.

En guise de conclusion, je veux vous remercier de nouveau de vos efforts continus en réponse à cette crise de santé publique sans précédent qu'est la COVID-19, d'une façon qui soit conforme à nos valeurs et afin de veiller à ce que notre gouvernement soit efficace, transparent et responsable aux yeux des Canadiens.

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P. / c.p., député President of the Treasury Board Président du Conseil du Trésor September 4, 2020

### Dear Secretary Wallace

On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos sent a message to Cabinet Ministers (attached) reminding them of the importance of maintaining strong information management and of publishing valuable COVID-related data to the Open Government Portal. We are pleased to share how collaboration between our respective departments has contributed to this call for action.

In March, a Task Team was formed between the Public Health Agency of Canada's medical geographers, epidemiologist, analysts and project managers, Natural Resources Canada's geospatial experts, and Statistics Canada's data analysts, data scientists and geospatial experts, to develop COVID situational awareness products for internal and public use. This grassroots collaboration, initiated by the experts themselves, voluntarily assembled and rapidly mobilized the best talent from across their respective departments and the task team now involving leaders from departmental branches support the Government of Canada's COVID reporting efforts.

Openness and transparency have been guiding principles since the inception of the task team. As such, all sharable COVID-related data have been, and will continue to be, published on the Open Government portal. The wealth of information published to date is impressive, with over 40 datasets of high socioeconomic relevance being published by Statistics Canada, ranging from the impact of social distancing measures on businesses, to households with populations with underlying health issues, to the percentage of the workforce laid off due to COVID-19. Statistics Canada used new innovative and modern science methods to produce these data. From the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, COVID-19 epidemiological data were also published to the Open Government portal. Data contained in the International dashboard that describes COVID-19-related cases and deaths by country has also been published here, and data contained in the Canada COVID-19 Situational Awareness Dashboard were published here. This effort has been supported by the experts in open geospatial data, analytics, and innovative technology from Natural Resources Canada as well as geomatics and informatics experts from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the communication team from Health Canada.

Our teams are also working across federal departments and agencies, and with provinces and territories to ensure the continued and timely release of information to Canadians through the Open Government Portal and supporting our Ministers' commitments to policies and directives on open government.



Mr. Secretary, this is truly a remarkable demonstration of commitment to public service, and to partnership and collaboration, for which we are all very proud. This Task Team continues to work together every day, as Canada deals with this unprecedented pandemic situation. For more information, please contact any of the following leads of the Task Team:

<u>Janice Sharpe</u>, Senior Director, Federal Geospatial Platform, NRCan (Open Government Director General Committee member)

Alice Born, Director, Statistical Geomatics Centre/Mathieu Laporte, Director of Dissemination Division, Statistics Canada

<u>Stephanie Brazeau</u>, Team leader – Public Health Geomatics, National Microbiology Laboratory, Public Health Risk Sciences Division, PHAC

Regards,	
Signature:	Date: September 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2020
Anil Arora, Chief Statistician of Canada Signature:	Date: Al 20 20 W
Iain Stewart, President of the Public Health Agency of Can	
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Signature: _	Date: 9/14/2428.
Christyne Tremblay, Deputy Minister, Natural Resources O	Canada

Public Health Agence de la santé Agency of Canada publique du Canada

Docket Number / Numéro du dossier 20-115835-439

# Routing Slip / Bordereau d'envoi

Program Contact / Responsable du programme Kelly Saunders Print or type name / imprimez ou dactylographiez le nom	Date: Nov 12, 2020	
Director / Directeur (trice) Print or type name / Imprimez ou dactylographiez le nom	- Date :	
Director General / Directeur (trice) général(e) print or type name / imprimez ou dactylographiez le nom	Date: Nov 12, 2020	
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Guillaume Poliquin, A Scientific Director General, National Microbiology Lab		
Branch Head Approval / Approbation de chef de la direction	générale	
BILINGUAL TITLE / Open and Transparent Sharing of COVID-19 Data /		
TITRE BILINGUE Partage ouvert et transparent des données COVID-19		
Can this title be released to the public? / Est-ce que ce titre peut être communiqué au public?  X Yes / Oui  No / Non		
If no, please identify sensitivities / Si la réponse est non, veuillez préciser les enjeux :		
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lain Stewart	Date:	
Chief Public Health Officer		
Administratrice en chef de la santé publique Theresa Tam	Date :	

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Public Health Agence de la santé Agency of Canada Publique du Canada

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President / Président	Date :	
lain Stewart		
Chief Public Health		
Officer	Date :	
Administratrice en chef de la santé publique Theresa Tam		

Quality Control / Contrôle de la qualité

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20-115835-439

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### SUMMARY

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### **BACKGROUND:**

The sudden onset of the COVID-19 epidemic in Canada, and the crucial need for public situational awareness, presented an urgent cross-departmental requirement to create and deliver authoritative information, maps and dashboards to government decision-makers and the public.



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### RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSION:

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Mary Comment	Nov. 19, 2020
Branch Head	Date
□do not concur	
□concur	
President	-
Data	
Date	
MECS# 20-115835-439	
Contact: Telephone:	

### Attachments

- Appendix A Email letter from Treasury Board President, the
  Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, to all ministers, subject "The importance
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- Appendix B Trilateral Letter to Treasury Board Secretary Peter Wallace from Chief Statistician Anil Anora, (former) PHAC President Tina Namiesniowski, and Deputy Minister of NRCan

September 4, 2020

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On May 27<sup>th</sup>, Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos sent a message to Cabinet Ministers (attached) reminding them of the importance of maintaining strong information management and of publishing valuable COVID-related data to the Open Government Portal. We are pleased to share how collaboration between our respective departments has contributed to this call for action.

In March, a Task Team was formed between the Public Health Agency of Canada's medical geographers, epidemiologist, analysts and project managers, Natural Resources Canada's geospatial experts, and Statistics Canada's data analysts, data scientists and geospatial experts, to develop COVID situational awareness products for internal and public use. This grassroots collaboration, initiated by the experts themselves, voluntarily assembled and rapidly mobilized the best talent from across their respective departments and the task team now involving leaders from departmental branches support the Government of Canada's COVID reporting efforts.

Openness and transparency have been guiding principles since the inception of the task team. As such, all sharable COVID-related data have been, and will continue to be, published on the Open Government portal. The wealth of information published to date is impressive, with over 40 datasets of high socioeconomic relevance being published by Statistics Canada, ranging from the impact of social distancing measures on businesses, to households with populations with underlying health issues, to the percentage of the workforce laid off due to COVID-19. Statistics Canada used new innovative and modern science methods to produce these data. From the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, COVID-19 epidemiological data were also published to the Open Government portal. Data contained in the International dashboard that describes COVID-19-related cases and deaths by country has also been published here, and data contained in the Canada COVID-19 Situational Awareness Dashboard were published here. This effort has been supported by the experts in open geospatial data, analytics, and innovative technology from Natural Resources Canada as well as geomatics and informatics experts from the Public Health Agency of Canada and the communication team from Health Canada.

Our teams are also working across federal departments and agencies, and with provinces and territories to ensure the continued and timely release of information to Canadians through the Open Government Portal and supporting our Ministers' commitments to policies and directives on open government.



Mr. Secretary, this is truly a remarkable demonstration of commitment to public service, and to partnership and collaboration, for which we are all very proud. This Task Team continues to work together every day, as Canada deals with this unprecedented pandemic situation.

For more information, please contact any of the following leads of the Task Team:

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Alice Born, Director, Statistical Geomatics Centre/Mathieu Laporte, Director of Dissemination Division, Statistics Canada

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Regards,		
Signature:	Date: September 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	
Anil Arora, Chief Statistician of Canada		
Signature:	Date:	
Iain Stewart, President of the Public Health Agency of Canada		
Signature:	Date:	
Christyne Tremblay Denuty Minister Natural Reson	irces Canada	