Transcript: Renewing the Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service engagement session (23 June 2022)

This engagement session, led by Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Privy Council Office, and Statistics Canada, and supported by the GC Data Community at the Canada School of Public Service, kicked off the renewal of the GC Data Strategy.

Shaifa Kanji, *Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Digital Officer, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, moderated audience questions and the discussion among:*

- **Stephen Burt**, *Chief Data Officer of Canada, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat*
- **Kara Beckles**, *Director General, Data Integrity, Results and Delivery Unit, Privy Council Office*
- **André Loranger**, *Assistant Chief Statistician for Strategic Data Management, Methods and Analysis, and Chief Data Officer, Statistics Canada*

During the last section of the session, audience members answered polling questions using Slido. The polling section is not included in the recording nor in the transcript.

Shaifa Kanji: Good afternoon and welcome to today's session, entitled "Renewing the Data Strategy Roadmap for the Federal Public Service".

[00:00:20] Je m'appelle Shaifa Kanji et je suis sous-ministre adjointe et dirigeante principale du numérique à Innovation, Sciences et Développement économique Canada.

[00:00:30] I would like to acknowledge that the land I am on is part of the Treaty and Traditional Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Nations. You may be joining us from various parts of the country. And so I encourage you to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge the territory you're occupying.

[00:01:00] I'm really pleased to be your session moderator today. As a cohost of the 2023 GC Data Conference, I recognize the importance of having frequent GC-wide opportunities for discussion and input on data priorities and best practices.

[00:01:15] This includes today's session on renewing the data strategy. Your input will help to make sure that the renewed strategy reflects the GC's current environment.

[00:01:30] And it positions us to continue to prioritize and improve the use of data in years to come. I would like to share some administrative details to support your experience during this event.

[00:01:45] For simultaneous interpretation, please follow along using Wordly, a web-based, AI-powered interpretation service. You will find the link in the chat.

[00:02:00] Tout au long de l'événement d'aujourd'hui, nous vous encourageons à participer dans la langue officielle de votre choix.

[00:02:15] Les présentations dans les deux langues officielles sont disponibles sur le site GCwiki pour l'événement. Au cours de la séance d'aujourd'hui, vous aurez un aperçu du renouvellement de la Stratégie relative aux données, et vous aurez l'occasion de poser des questions et de formuler des commentaires sur les priorités du renouvellement.

[00:02:37] We will be answering your questions on the renewal as part of an upcoming question-and-answer session.

[00:02:45] Please enter your questions on Slido. To access Slido, please visit the link in the chat or go to slido.com and join with #DataDonnees. As well, please use the upvoting feature as this will help us to determine which questions are most important to you.

[00:03:00] We may not get to all of the questions today, but we will try to answer as many as we can.

[00:03:15] If you have technical questions related to the session, please enter them into the chat box directly on WebEx. Please note that we are recording today's session so that we can make it available for all federal employees, who we're not able to attend.

[00:03:30] And finally, your turn now. We invite you to participate in three short polls via Slido.

[00:03:45] Pour commencer, nous aimerions mieux vous connaître : Où êtes-vous pour notre réunion d'aujourd'hui? Where are you joining us from today? I see Ottawa as one of the main leads with lots of other areas as well.

[00:04:00] Second question. What department are you a part of? TBS, Health Canada, CRA, StatsCan. We have such a wide representation today. Really pleased to see everybody. And the last question, what is your job title? Quel est le titre de votre poste?

[00:04:15] I'm really happy to see a wide variety of participation. Thank you so much for joining us. Please note all of your responses are anonymous.

[00:04:30] All right, it's time to get the show on the road. It is my pleasure to welcome our speakers. Joining us today, we have Stephen Burt. He is the recently appointed Chief Data Officer for the Government of Canada at Treasury Board Secretariat.

[00:04:45] We have Kara Beckles, recently named the first Chief Data Officer for Privy Council Office and André Loranger, the Assistant Chief Statistician for Strategic Data Management, Methods, and Analysis, and is also the Chief Data Officer at Statistics Canada.

[00:05:00] Our presenters will provide us with an overview of the data strategy renewal, a retrospective on the original data strategy, and also highlight some early priorities that need attention. I'll turn it over to you, Kara, to get us started.

Kara Beckles: Thanks so much, Shaifa, for taking us through that introduction. And thank you to all of the participants who are joining us today.

[00:05:36] So I'm just going to start us off here by thinking a little bit about the data and how we use it as public servants and how we thought about it in terms of the data strategy of the past and the data strategy yet to come.

[00:05:51] So you can see here, there's a bit of a value chain of data. Where at the very top of this are Canadians, as well as the services that we provide to them. And how we are looking to improve outcomes as we go. And then we have at the bottom of this value chain, which is the focus of a data strategy,

[00:06:15] is those foundations that we have to have to be able to use and pull value from the data that Canadians trust us with. And then we need the data capabilities to be able to use that data to provide better services, to make better policy, and to drive better decisions.

[00:06:30] So on the next slide, just a bit of a reminder to the 2018 Data Strategy Roadmap that was published by the Clerk of the Privy Council.

[00:06:45] And that, again, was also jointly worked on by the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and Statistics Canada. This picture here is the framework that was used at the time.

[00:07:00] And as we've been exploring this framework, we've realized again, it followed that value chain of thinking about what foundations do we need to have in place. What are the guiding principles that we need to follow and what are we ultimately trying to achieve?

[00:07:15] So there was a lot that was right in this framework. But of course a lot has happened since 2018. We've been through a pandemic. We've taken leaps and bounds in some places, and in other places things have lagged behind a little bit.

[00:07:29] So I'm going turn it over next to André Loranger to talk about some of the successes that we've had since then.

André Loranger: All right. Thanks, Kara. So since the last data strategy was published, we we've had a lot of gains since, and we have created what I think we could call preconditions for true progress towards data and digitally enabled public service.

[00:08:00] Since the drafting of the first strategy, 40 plus departments have written data strategies, and many are currently ever greening their data strategies.

[00:08:15] We have gone from the first CDO in the public service, named at ESDC, to most organizations having a CDO or some other data authority. We have a group of CDOs now

[00:08:30] working collectively together to share knowledge and expertise through the CDO Council. And most recently, we have the naming of Stephen Burt as the CDO of Canada.

[00:09:06] Des importants progrès ont été réalisés pour améliorer les services de littératie des données dans l'ensemble du GC... de nombreux ministères et organismes ont utilisé des outils pour mesurer la littératie des données au sein

de leurs organisations et ont élaboré des plans de formation pour apporter des améliorations au besoin – en tirant parti des offres de l'École de la fonction publique du Canada et de l'Académie numérique.

[00:09:12] Many government organizations are now at the "ready stage" and are looking for enabling pieces, such as frameworks, whether they be legislative, trust frameworks, quality ethics, systems of standards, and access to modern tools and technology.

[00:09:30] Grassroots movements across the government of Canada — the Enterprise Data Community of Practice, for example, and the collaborative work developed in various working groups on things like standards and quality frameworks,

[00:09:45] the knowledge and information sharing in fora, such as the CDO Council and the DG Data Leads the growing Government of Canada Data Community led by the School — work that's been done in groups with proper guard rails could be scaled toward enterprise solutions. Next slide please.

[00:10:15] Donc, la nouvelle Feuille de route sera axée sur des actions concrètes avec des résultats mesurables. La nouvelle Feuille de route sera stratégiquement alignée sur l'évolution de l'environnement numérique et des données et sur les priorités actuelles du gouvernement du Canada, l'objectif ultime étant d'obtenir de meilleurs résultats pour les Canadiens.

[00:10:30] The Government of Canada must remain open, agile, adaptive, so that we are able to respond to emerging needs of Canadians, Canadian businesses, and Canadian institutions. We need to ensure that we put data at the beginning of our planning processes,

[00:10:45] we must turn vertical accountabilities into horizontal collaborations and see that as a data community, we are better together. Finally, data- and evidence-based decision-making must be the foundation for all we do —

[00:11:00] producing insights, which leads to policies, which leads to services, which improves the lives of Canadians. I'll now turn it over to Stephen for the rest of the presentation. Thanks, Stephen.

Stephen Burt: Merci, André. Bon après-midi, tout le monde. Donc, ici je vais souligner que l'un des objectifs du renouvellement est d'assurer

l'harmonisation entre les priorités du gouvernement et l'évolution de l'environnement numérique et des données. Nous ne voulons pas doubler les efforts que nous déployons. Nous voulons plutôt tirer parti de l'excellent travail qui se fait déjà à l'échelle du gouvernement du Canada.

[00:11:42] So this includes taking into account government of Canada-wide work, such as the ambition for government in a digital age, and the recent recommendations from the ADM SEP Working Group for Data and Information.

[00:12:00] As well, we want to reflect the work that has been ongoing in departments or various functional domains, such as, for example, the Pan-Canadian Health Data Strategy, and make sure that we recognize efforts from working groups and communities, such as this one, with the GC Data Community.

[00:12:15] We can move to slide seven. For us to develop a renewed strategy that truly reflects a whole of government perspective we need to work openly and collaboratively. To support this, we are undertaking broad federal engagement, complemented by targeted external outreach. Next…

[00:12:30] Our engagement approach spans from now into the fall. During this period, we intend to engage across levels in communities in the GC.

[00:12:45] Notre approche comprend deux activités organisées en collaboration avec l'École de la fonction publique du Canada – celle-ci étant la première – et elle exploitera davantage les groupes et comités existants.

[00:12:54] The consultations throughout the summer and fall will [00:13:00] inform a draft renewed strategy that we are targeting for approval at the end of 2022. Slide nine...

[00:13:09] So overall the renewal will build off the work that has happened in recent years, including the mapping of the data landscape [00:13:15] and the efforts of the ADM SEP Working Group for Data and Information. Over the next several months, we will be consulting, developing, and iterating on the material, which will inform the renewed data strategy, and throughout there will be a number of opportunities for you to provide your input.

[00:13:30] I'm now going to hand it back to Kara, who will speak about the goals of the renewal. Over to you, Kara.

Kara Beckles: Yeah. So why are we doing this? So the original data strategy really

[00:13:45] acted as a guiding light to the Government of Canada, but a lot of the implementation was left to departments to create their own data strategy, to think about their own data, and what they wanted to achieve and how they could improve processes.

[00:14:00] Going forward, really we're going to be working on what are some concrete government, wide actions and outcomes that we're looking at, looking at that from an enterprise perspective.

[00:14:15] So the renewed data map will be strategically aligned with the evolving digital and data environment and existing Government of Canada priorities. We need to ensure that we're putting data at the beginning of our planning processes.

[00:14:30] So one of the things that I heard that I often repeat is that we have to treat data like the fuel that fuels our system, and not the exhaust that comes out the other end. So thinking about as we're creating new programs or developing new policies,

[00:14:45] thinking about the data as we start that process instead of as an afterthought at the end, and then, oh yeah, how are we going to measure the outcomes of this?

[00:15:00] We need to communicate, strategize, and inform the entire GC of efforts towards moving from the ready state and moving into the action state. So not only is this meant to serve as another guiding star, but also to be something that is concrete,

[00:15:15] has concrete actions that will be followed and tracked over time and have accountabilities with it. If we move to the next slide … I'm going to talk a little bit about some framework adjustments.

[00:15:30] So I showed the framework at the from the old data strategy at the beginning of the presentation. So as I mentioned, it had a lot of things right. But we've evolved since then.

[00:15:45] So this is a first stab at how we might want to evolve that existing framework. So for one, the guiding principles: do we have all of those right? One of the things that we've heard is that on the old strategy the word "agile" didn't necessarily

[00:16:00] resonate with people as much as some of the other items on there, but it might have been missing "ethical". So that's one of the early changes we made. We also have to settle on a vision statement. We've got a working vision statement here, but we know that

[00:16:15] we're not done. And that we need to listen to you and make sure that we're incorporating the GC vision into this. We've also really focused the desired outcomes to make sure that it's

[00:16:30] not everything for everyone, but what are really those high level desired outcomes that we're trying to achieve? We've also raised up data as an asset supported by three pillars of Talent Governance, Processes, and Tools.

[00:16:45] One of the other changes that we made was separating Talent and Culture. A lot of times those were pulled together under People, but they're very two very different sides of the coin when

[00:17:00] we're talking about people in this. So these are some of the early changes that we've thought about and that we think are a positive change. But we're looking to hear from you as well.

[00:17:15] So that brings us to the conclusion of the presentation. And I'll turn it back to you, Shaifa, as we start in on our question-and-answer period.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you. Thanks so much, Kara. Thank you for setting the context.

[00:17:30] I think this has really helped us set it up really nicely and move to the next portion of the session, which is my favorite, the Q and A period. So for this portion, we will be asking questions posed by the audience,

[00:17:45] including some that have been proposed through an earlier discussion post on the data community GCcollab site. So as a reminder to the audience, to all those of you who are attending, please feel free to enter your questions and you can vote on others on Slido as well.

[00:18:00] And again, the code is #DataDonnees. So to start with, I'd love to put our speakers and panelists on the hot seat. And, to start with Stephen, we'll start the first question with you.

[00:18:15] So revising the data strategy is a collective effort — implementing it, even more so. How do you plan to sustain the collective effort over time?

Stephen Burt: Yeah, it's a great question. And I think probably everyone on this call has experienced this over the last four plus years as we've started to move beyond talking about data and starting to actually work in this space.

[00:18:45] I think from where I'm sitting at Treasury Board, looking at the Government of Canada as an enterprise, I think there's a couple of different aspects to the collectivity piece.

[00:19:00] One is making sure that we are clear on what actually needs to be managed at that enterprise level. So what are the things that we need to be standardizing and assuring across departments and agencies?

[00:19:09] And that's going to be the major focus for me and my team as we move out on through the work on the strategy and then on the implementation that comes out the other end of it.

[00:19:15] And then what are the pieces underneath that that need to be organized either functionally — and I'm thinking here are the work that comes out of, for example, the Chief Human Resources Officer,

[00:19:30] or the Comptroller General for the financial community, or others — and what are those where we need to leave the space to departments and agencies to actually do their business, right?

[00:19:45] And just make sure that they are plugged in where they need to be plugged in and get what they need to do their work, as opposed to where they have the freedom to make it up as they go.

[00:20:00] So there's a lot of moving parts in this. We have a lot of different organizations, collectively, engaged in these things — from the GC Data Community that we're speaking to now, through the CDO council, through the, the Data Leads (the group that Kara chairs.

[00:20:15] We are going to be standing up a slightly more hierarchical group of ADMs dealing with data and information as a committee for decision making purposes.

[00:20:30] And one of the things you'll see in the strategy is a grouping, a framing, of all of these other bodies, such that we are clear in our own minds and across government what each one of them is for and how they interact with each other. So we're doing that work now, and you'll see it formalized in the strategy so everyone has it somewhere where they can find it.

[00:20:45] So, I think the key thing for me is making sure — I think we have the tools. I think we have the maturity and the knowledge now compared to where we started.

[00:21:00] I think we've gotta actually start putting some things into action here. And the important piece of the data strategy for me is going to be that implementation plan that comes out for the next two or three years, where we actually hold ourselves to account for the stuff we're going to do and hold specific departments and agencies to account for delivering specific pieces of it.

[00:21:15] So that'll be where my focus is from a Treasury Board standpoint, and working in collaboration with our partners here at Privy Council and at StatsCan to make sure we keep the context right at the strategic policy level,

[00:21:30] as well as making sure that we can draw on the expertise that StatsCan presents here. I don't know, Shaifa, if you want to turn over to Kara or André for anything else?

Shaifa Kanji: Yeah, sure, thank you. I mean, this is definitely a team sport as you so rightly put it. There are just so many different pieces, and implementation is key, right?

[00:22:00] Piecing together the strategy and the framework is definitely doable. We've done that in the past. Yeah, I'd love for Kara or André to join in

and have any additional comments or questions. And then I'll have a question for Kara after that.

André Loranger: Okay. Well maybe I can jump in. My perspective from Statistics Canada is that we've been in the data game for a hundred years. We've got a lot of expertise in all the dimensions that you can think of related to data.

[00:22:30] And as we move the data strategy forward, I think we have a lot of expertise to enable the rest of government to up its game across the board, including ourselves.

[00:22:45] And I think it's a work that has to be done in partnership with PCO and Treasury Board, because they actually have the levers to get things done. So we have a lot of experience and expertise.

[00:23:00] However, we really need our central agencies to move the yard sticks with respect to adopting enabling frameworks and policies and directives to really make sure that as a government, we are where we should be with respect to data and data management.

Kara Beckles: I'll maybe just throw one last thought in here on this question. I think we're already working on data from a very collective space. There are a lot of grassroots groups working

[00:23:30] on different aspects of this, pulling together people who are tackling the same problems, working in the same area. They're speaking together.

[00:23:45] I think what we need to do is also create those opportunities where there's these great ideas coming from across the system at the grassroot areas, how are we then able to bring them up and support those ideas and implement them on a wide stage, as opposed to just individuals talking to each other.

[00:24:00] So how do we formalize some of these ideas and adopt them right across the system? I think that's also an important aspect of the strategy and what Stephen was talking about —

[00:24:15] of pulling the threads of all sort of these existing pieces together, and maturing the system, and formalizing some of the relationships between them.

Shaifa Kanji: Thanks, Kara. That is actually a really good segue into one of the next questions that we're getting from our participants.

[00:24:30] So the internal focus and connecting the dots internally, but then translating that into service to Canadians. So question for you, Kara is: federal government service delivery has been front page news, and it's not good. How can we use the data strategy renewal to support better service to Canadians?

Kara Beckles: Yeah. So, I mean, front page news, this is something as you can imagine is

[00:25:00] hitting me and my team all the time, as well as probably many people who are listening in right now. It's top of mind for Clerk and many DMs. Personally, my team has been tasked with: okay, what is the data on this?

[00:25:15] What can you show us? What's going on with these services? How has demand changed? How has supply changed over time? And really provide the numbers behind what is going on.

[00:25:30] What is behind the people standing on the sidewalk, waiting for their passports right now? That's the way to understand it. It's to be able to pull that data together. I think what the data strategy does, by concentrating on things like

[00:25:45] shareability and interoperability. That is the key to this because in the work that we're trying to do right now, really, really quickly, again, it's a matter of reaching out to contacts in different departments who all collect this data and are feeding up internally.

[00:26:00] But to pull that all together into one place, to show what's happening with IRCC and the visa program, what's happening, with Service Canada and the delivery of passports,

[00:26:15] what's happening on the EI side, and some of these other services. Are we in danger of more of these services? Are there some warning trends

coming about as we head into summer. What about things like fishing licenses and hunting licenses and all of this,

[00:26:30] but sometimes pulling that data together to be able to tell that story is a lot more painful than it has to be. So how do we improve that sharing and interoperability of the data? And that is one of those

[00:26:45] foundational pieces that the data strategy really has to work on. Because the only way to pull that full value out of the Government of Canada data is to be able to look at the various pieces together and not just individually.

Stephen Burt: Shaifa, can I jump on this as well? I think that sharing and interoperability, those last two themes that Kara touched on, are really key here.

[00:27:15] I think that — and I see in the chat, a few other elements being added in, in terms of continuums and COVID — I think that

[00:27:30] where federal government services intersect with private sector and other levels of government, we need to be just as clear-eyed and focused on shareability and

[00:27:45] interoperability as we are amongst departments and agencies. So there's going to be a lot of stuff in the data strategy about how we share with each other and how we do things like making sure that there are clearly identified data stewards who are accountable for

[00:28:00] maintaining and making available certain data sets and that other departments and agencies have an obligation to go to those data stewards for that data, so we don't duplicate. But we're also going to have to push out beyond federal government into creating some obligations or expectations for others as well.

[00:28:15] And I think beyond passports — where you can probably put some of this down to COVID and the fact that people maybe delayed renewals, as well as staffing issues — when we look at what's happening in airports right now in that intersection

[00:28:30] between airline data, airport data, security services offered by the federal government, border services offered by the federal government — what is the sharing going on there? Could it be better? Could we streamline some of this? We can do better in some of these spaces.

[00:28:45] And I know for example, Transport Canada, who I just stole that line from about those intersections, is already seized with this and is looking at these things. I think there's a lot of those out there where either federal government intersects with provincial and municipal,

[00:29:00] or where we intersect with particular key industries. And we could do a better job across the board on what we provide to Canadians.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you. That's definitely top of mind. And I think as a lot of us think about summer vacations and plans.

[00:29:15] I was just at the airport yesterday and a really long line up, a long wait, and so I think just the general notion of service experience to Canadians. And how can we use data to, to better enable that.

[00:29:30] Talking about data, another topic that's also top of mind, André, and I'll ask you this question, is data literacy. So where is the place for data literacy in the renewed GC data strategy or roadmap? If you're able to share a little bit about that?

André Loranger: Sure can. It's interesting that Stephen just now mentioned data stewardship. And when we think about data stewardship as an organization,

[00:30:00] we think about a lot of things — we think about data quality, data standards, the management of data governance — but data literacy is a big piece of what we think of in terms of our role as data stewards,

[00:30:15] as the national statistics organization. And of course, if you think about the data strategy, where does data literacy fit in? Well, I think it becomes a very important piece of the data strategy.

[00:30:30] Whether it's for employees, for managers, for executives, I think everybody needs to understand data a little bit better. And we need to have clear markers in the data strategy for pushing us down that road, so to speak.

[00:30:45] There's been a lot of work that's been done on measuring data literacy in governments. In fact, that's been one of the themes at recent data conferences.

[00:31:00] We are always talking about that. And there's a thirst to become more knowledgeable and literate with respect to data. There's training at all levels that's available. The School certainly offers a lot of training. We offer a lot of training at Statistics Canada,

[00:31:15] I'll point you to our data literacy boot camps, which we have another one starting very shortly, that's aimed for public servants and the public sector. So all that to say that we do need to pay a lot of attention to data literacy

[00:31:30] in the strategy moving forward. But I think we will, and I think we're well positioned to do that.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you that that's really helpful. And, you know, while I'm at it,

[00:31:45] I'll put in a plug for the Canada School of Public Service, as well. I absolutely adore the information, the training, and the opportunities that are there. And I really encourage our audience to take a peek, on a monthly basis when information comes to us about the training and what's available. It's simply phenomenal.

[00:32:00] So, we've been talking about data a lot in general terms. I'm wondering if we're able to provide some concrete examples in terms of how are we're using data practically to improve services, policies, and programs.

[00:32:15] And maybe for this one, we'll start with Kara and then go to Stephen and then André.

Kara Beckles: All right. Thanks, Shaifa.

[00:32:30] Of course, you know, PCO doesn't deliver services, but we definitely spend a lot of time providing advice around decision making. So as an aggregator of data, this is how I'm often thinking about it, about

[00:32:45] pulling together all of those different pieces to tell stories and coherent pictures of what's really going on. Where I often see this is in stock takes with the Prime Minister and different groups of ministers

[00:33:00] talking about key issues and how setting a data foundation to start off those meetings really helps shape the conversation in making sure that as key decision makers

[00:33:15] are talking about the implications and what comes next and what are the next steps, what doesn't come sneak into those conversations is that, oh, I heard this, or I think this is what's happening, or here's some anecdotes

[00:33:30] or here's some misconceptions or some myths that we think might be true. And having data as the foundation of those meetings really means that then

[00:33:45] when those conversations about next steps happen, they're happening from the same stage going forward. Also, as an aggregator, throughout COVID, pulling data together across programs,

[00:34:00] I've seen how essential it is to really understand service delivery, how well things are going, but also for unsticking things, where programs were being delivered, often at record speed

[00:34:15] without necessarily the full thought process at the beginning. It was like, oh, we need to get supports out to people. We need to get supports out to business.

[00:34:30] What the data allowed throughout that process was to make adjustments and to say, okay, we didn't get it a hundred percent right on the first round, but now we're going to tweak and we're going to use the evidence that we're collecting as we're delivering. To say, oh, we've missed these groups of people,

[00:34:45] certain businesses are not able to access these support programs, even though they need them because of these technical details. And I think this is where, on the fly, we've really learned how to use data to be agile,

[00:35:00] and improve that service delivery as we go. And to be able to pull all that data and show decision makers, in really accurate terms, here's what's working here, here's what isn't.

[00:35:15] And I think it's increased the threshold and the willingness to make changes as we go, which I've seen as a really positive thing. But the reliance on the data to make those decisions and to have something to point to as justification —

[00:35:30] as in we didn't make as a mistake to start, we just moved really fast and now we're adjusting as we go. And I hope going forward that that is something that we see continue as we go, because no matter how much time we spend designing something, we never get it a hundred percent right.

[00:35:45] So just my last two years at the Privy Council Office has really shown me that the power of data to make those adjustments as we go.

Stephen Burt: Yeah. I actually don't have a ton to add to that. I think COVID has brought a lot of practical uses of data front and center. It's also brought a lot more tools into the tool belt

[00:36:15] for ways we can do it, that we can push out, break down to the working level. And I think it ties a little bit to the earlier question about literacy too.

[00:36:30] I think that we have seen massive changes in the last four years, but especially in the last two years of the pandemic. In how people understand the tools that are available to them and what is doable in this space. And what I'm hearing now when I talk to departments and agencies, whether Defense, where I came from, or others,

[00:36:45] lots of good questions around, for example, Armed Forces recruiting. How can we do a better job of pushing this into the digital space, such that it expands the available candidate pools.

[00:37:00] It also allows us to track where people are at and through the process, and allows them to track where they're at through the process, using near real-time data. I think we're having similar discussions with OCHRO around HR data for employees, right.

[00:37:15] And distinguishing ownership from stewardship, such that we recognize that employees own their personal data and that the responsibility of departments and agencies is to steward it in such a way that it makes everyone's lives better.

[00:37:30] I think we're getting to some really crunchy, practical applications now and balancing out. Certainly one of the lessons I've learned doing this for a while now, is that balancing out the building of those foundational pieces

[00:37:45] that will make your life better in two or three or four years, by also delivering new capability and new product now is really where the magic happens. If you can demonstrate results in

[00:38:00] weeks and months with specific tools, while also building out your quality control and your governance and your stewardship and all that for future efforts. I think we're in that zone now and we're going to see some pretty impressive acceleration over the course of the next few months or a couple years.

Shaifa Kanji: André, would you like to add?

André Loranger: The only thing I would add here is that using

[00:38:30] data and decision making is not new. Certainly not in the case of official statistics, right? So we've been producing GDP and all kinds of indicators, CPI, that policy makers use to make monetary or fiscal policy and so on.

[00:38:45] I think what's different here is that we're really trying to leverage enterprise-level data. So the data that sits in all our corporate systems, and so on, to make better decisions.

[00:39:00] And maybe one example that's concrete, because I think the question was about examples, is some of the work that we did with partners early on in the pandemic with respect to monitoring or tracking the supply and demand of personal protective equipment.

[00:39:15] As the pandemic was rolling out, there was real concerns that we wouldn't have enough PPE in Canada to keep our frontline workers safe,

[00:39:30] our Canadians safe, and then we really needed to figure out, well, what is the state of the various PPE products.

[00:39:45] We quickly realized that, well, how do you do that when various jurisdictions classify things differently? Are you talking about one glove? Are you talking about a pair of gloves? Are you talking about a box of gloves?

[00:40:00] So there's a lot of work that happened behind the scenes, just to organize that, and then classify things, and organize them in ways that make the data useful. We had to organize data pipelines and

[00:40:15] mechanisms to allow data sharing. And then we had to think about, okay, now that we have all this information, how do we put it together in meaningful ways — visualizations and so on — to make sure that the people

[00:40:30] who were deciding, the deputy ministers, and so on, were making the decisions about some things. How could we give them the information in ways that they could easily use? So all those things I think are, to me, elements that the data strategy needs to look at.

[00:40:45] PPE is just one example of thousands of examples. And I think it's really about leveraging, again, that internal information that we all have in our corporate systems.

[00:41:00] But we need to do so in a meaningful way as data stewards and really apply some key principles there to make sure that we can leverage data properly.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you. I think all of your points around

[00:41:15] enterprise data and making use of it in real-time, or near real-time, to make informed decisions is definitely the goal. And that's where we want to go towards. Stephen, I have a question for you from the audience,

[00:41:30] what does the Chief Data Office have mind for really specific steps and strategic guidance with assigned responsibilities, given the federated model of data governance.

Stephen Burt: Sure. So since I became an Assistant Deputy Minister, my favorite work word has become "accountability", which is about who you hold responsible for doing certain things

[00:42:00] and who has to actually answer for it. It's fundamental to our structures and I think that's some ways what we've been missing on the data side of the house.

[00:42:15] We have a tendency because of the way our powers and mandates are assigned to duplicate data collections and duplicate holdings for our own purposes within our own silos.

[00:42:30] And given citizens' expectations in this space and how services are increasingly being delivered by the private sector, we need to find a way to build data out horizontally. And I think the key for that in our system is going to be, as I mentioned in passing earlier, assigning specific data domains to specific departments and agencies, holding them accountable for keeping that quality

[00:43:00] high quality and reliable, or the quality that needs to be anyway. And then putting an obligation on others to go to whoever that steward is in order to get that data, rather than creating their own. Someone I saw in the chat scrolling by here, someone was pointing out that

[00:43:15] even within departments, we struggle with that in some cases, right. We have multiple collections of multiple data sets, for related, but slightly different programs. We need to flip that around and actually,

[00:43:30] if that data set's not right or isn't good enough, or there's a problem with it, once we've pushed you to use it, let's fix that as opposed to building another one. So I think there's a lot of tools available now that will allow us to do this better.

[00:43:45] I think we're into cloud tools in a much bigger way than I thought we would be two, three years ago that will allow us make these holdings available and shareable. And actually, to draw one more link to something that was in the chat earlier, that was noting that with the tabling of the new privacy laws, we've gone from one in PIPEDA to — I think there's three or four different bills that have been tabled last week,

[00:44:15] around how we're going to modernize privacy by use of the private sector that is giving flexibilities that we don't currently have in the public sector, under the Privacy Act, which is almost as old as I am.

[00:44:30] So my view on this and the discussions going on now is that we're going to have to learn the lessons of this tabling and see where Parliament takes these laws. And we're going to want to follow fast in the wake of that in order to modernize what we deliver.

[00:44:45] I think we need a consistent set of rules for how we handle personal information across Canada and amongst both the public and private sector. And I think that that will go a long ways to helping Canadians

[00:45:00] understand what they can expect from us, as well as helping us understand particularly around sharing what we are and aren't allowed to do, because there are a lot more flexibilities in current legislation than people realize, but there are persistent myths

[00:45:15] and some not myths, some actual challenges with the way the 40-year-old Privacy Act constrains us. So we can do better. And we're going to have to get on that in the very near future.

[00:45:30] Yeah, I think that's it, in terms of specific accountabilities. I'll leave it there. There's something else in the back of my mind that it'll come back to me.

Shaifa Kanji: Sure. Thanks for that. And I think you kind of alluded towards trust, right? As we talk about Canadians and accessing their data.

[00:45:45] And perhaps André, I'll ask you this question: Are we meaningfully engaging Canadians in this strategy? We are using their data and we need to understand how to be trustworthy and

[00:46:00] earn their trust. So can you talk a little bit about trust, as it comes to engaging with Canadians, and how are we involving them in this renewed data strategy?

André Loranger: Yeah, I sure can. This is one of my largest preoccupations in my role at Statistics Canada is really thinking about trust in general. And when I think about that in terms of the national statistics organization,

[00:46:30] I like to think about trust in two elements. Canadians need to trust us, so that we can access their information. If we don't have the trust of Canadians, we cannot collect the information from them.

[00:46:45] And as an organization, we would struggle. So we spend a lot of time building the trust of Canadians. I'm going to go into how we do that.

[00:47:00] On the flip side, we provide information to Canadians, and if Canadians don't trust the information that we provide, again, we don't have any credibility as the national statistics office.

[00:47:15] So trust crosses all the boundaries of our work. Now with respect to ingestion of data, obviously privacy and access are really, really important.

[00:47:30] Canadians need to trust that we will protect the privacy of their information and we're required to do so by law. Through the Privacy Act, but also through the Statistics Act, which has very specific passages in the Act about how we're supposed to deal with data.

[00:47:45] But privacy and access in my view are not mutually exclusive and they do coexist. And we've been dealing with that for years and years. Of late, we've worked really closely with the Privacy Commissioner

[00:48:00] over the last two years to develop a necessity and proportionality framework to guide our own way of navigating the space, making sure that our collections

[00:48:15] are necessary to address the questions that are being posed to us. To inform Canadians, obviously, but also proportional to the risk, and so on, and the intrusion that they may cause. So that's the first thing.

[00:48:30] On the output side, it's really about competence and rigor and quality frameworks, and so on. And we put a lot of credence into those elements, because, again, as I said, if Canadians don't trust the information that we produce,

[00:48:45] then as a national statistics organization, we're not meeting our mandate. So all that, to me, when we think about all those things, comes back to transparency.

[00:49:00] And making sure that we're open with Canadians, that we're very clear about what we're doing with their data, that we can explain in very detailed terms of what we do with their data, and what outcomes

[00:49:15] they can gain from the work that we do. So we've built a trust centre, where we're being very transparent and I encourage people to look at it on our website. But all these things that we do as an organization in terms of official statistics,

[00:49:30] I think can be transported and reused elsewhere in the federal public service to raise the bar everywhere. And I think we've seen a lot of departments

[00:49:45] put a lot of emphasis on trust, in building their own trust centres, and so on. And I think collectively, we need to do more. And getting back to the original question, consulting Canadians — I think that is one way to really

[00:50:00] consult Canadians is to be very upfront with what we're doing and how we're using their data. Hopefully that answers your question, but happy to expand it if you want me to.

Shaifa Kanji: Yes it does. And honestly, all of these are such crunchy topics, right?

[00:50:15] We could have a whole day and then some more to talk about all of these really crunchy topics. Unfortunately we're at the end of our Q-and-A mark. I honestly think that all of these discussions around an enterprise approach

[00:50:30] to looking at data, service to Canadians, trust, data literacy — those are some really big rocks that we can spend a lot of time discussing. With that, we'll have to schedule some more time and continue this show another time.

[00:50:45] But what I want do before we move to the next part of the engagement session today is I'd like to provide a minute for each of our panelists to summarize and reflect on the questions and answers. That we've discussed so far.

[00:51:00] I'll start with you, Kara followed by Stephen, and then André.

Kara Beckles: All right. Thanks, Shaifa. What I might do is reflect on a few things. Scrolling through the chat that I've seen, that maybe we just didn't get a chance to get into very much.

[00:51:15] I know there's a lot of questions in there around literacy. And I know we did talk about that, but I just want to emphasize that

[00:51:30] literacy doesn't mean bringing everybody in the government up to the same level of being able to use machine learning and AI and all of that. It's really about, do you have enough knowledge of the space to ask the right questions, especially as managers and executives.

[00:51:45] Are you able to ask the right questions of your staff to make sure that they're using the data in a way that's giving you the answers that you need?

[00:52:00] Another one is that with this strategy, it needs to apply to not just those people across the public service who consider themselves data people, or in the data space or part of the data community, but everybody touches data in some way.

[00:52:15] And I think we also need to make sure that the people who collect data, whether that be at the border or through the delivery of a service or through however they're interacting with the public or businesses or whatever that is,

[00:52:30] that they're understanding the importance and the valuable asset that they are collecting as they do that. And that there are so many uses for that data, but we also then have to have the rules and the structures around that data to make sure that

[00:52:45] we can use that value, but we're not breaching any security or privacy issues with it. And finally, I saw a couple of comments around financing of data and is the Department of Finance involved and all of that.

[00:53:00] Data as an asset is really important and this means treating data like we do any other asset, like people, like physical resources, like our IT infrastructure. So that piece is also baked into the strategy, and where I said early on that we have to embed data in at the beginning of processes, that means there needs to be an expectation

[00:53:30] that when you write your MC for funding to launch a new program, the data isn't free. All the work you have to do with the data isn't free, those costs need to be accurately built in to those requests, just like we would for any other asset. Okay. I could go on forever, but I think that's probably more than my minute. So I'll stop there.

Shaifa Kanji: Thanks over to you, Stephen.

Stephen Burt: Thanks. Yeah, so plus one on everything Kara just said. I would encourage you all to remember that, like with every governorship, there isn't going to be a big pot of money sitting in the middle somewhere that everyone gets a piece of.

[00:54:15] This is going to be programmed and resourced through specific initiatives as we go and iterated through. But we are working on how we actually build that in, in a more rigorous way — to Treasury Board Submissions, all the way back up through MCs,

[00:54:30] to make sure that people are doing their due diligence on the data piece, because, as Kara says, it is not free. So two things I would leave you with here:

[00:54:45] One is that, as we work through all of this, I would encourage you all to think about your roles in the public service, what it is you do, and to reflect on the service part of public service, right? Whether that is specific in terms of services to Canadians

[00:55:00] and how we make those better or the more philosophical issue of serving the country. I think that, as we go through the data work, if we keep that ethos

[00:55:15] foremost in our minds, we will be close to the centre of target in terms of what it is we're trying to deliver here. And the second piece I would add is — we will be back. This is, as we said earlier, the first of many engagements, through the School and elsewhere, so don't despair.

[00:55:30] There's a ton of rich content I can see in the chat and on Slido. Most of what you're talking about are things that we have on our minds, and we will be back to talk to you again. I'll leave it there.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you. And André, the last word to you on this part of the session.

André Loranger: Okay. Well, I'll be brief. To me, when I look at the questions, when I think about the data strategy, I can't help but conclude that we're on the right track.

[00:56:00] All the things that were mentioned today somehow feed into the data strategy. And I think if we work collectively, we will be able to move the yard sticks. The question is how do we use data to be more effective for Canadians?

[00:56:15] It's really about the rules, the tools, and the people. And I suppose to some extent the infrastructure. And, again, all these things are key elements in the data strategy. And maybe I'll, I'll close with one last shameless plug for the Government of Canada Data Challenge,

[00:56:30] which was extended one week. So the deadline is this Friday. If folks have any great ideas of how to creatively use data

[00:56:45] within the public service to, again, move the yard sticks for Canadians, I encourage you to do so. And I'll stop there. Thank you, Shaifa.

Shaifa Kanji: Thank you. Thank you so much to all of the panelists. I really appreciated and enjoyed the discussion today.

[00:57:00] I know this is just the beginning. And Stephen, we look forward to hearing more from the trio and I know this is the first of the many sessions. So thank you so much — to all three of you — for sharing your experiences, your journey, and everything related to renewing this data strategy.